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(The) fool
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Robert Allen Wedding
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THE FOOL

"Have faith in me, Clare."

THE FOOL

A NOVEL
FROM THE PLAY

BY

CHANNING POLLOCK

ILLUSTRATED WITH SCENES
FROM THE PHOTOPLAY
A WILLIAM FOX PRODUCTION

GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

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Prelude

1271032

Life roars on. And, like seething ants, a power-razed humanity fights madly on—for what? Does it now?

Throughout history, nations have risen—and fallen. ut never have they risen to such heights of splendor s today. Giant miracle cities flaunt their puny randeur in the face of a silent, watching Creator. oes humanity think that, because He is silent, He oes not see?

Lofty buildings loom against the sky, brilliant, ar-ogant in the sunlight and their own pride. There re flung among these glistening towers of a modern abel some lofty steeples. They seem to vie with one nother to reach the sky—pushing, stretching, like en in a crowd, straining to see over the shoulders of heir neighbors, to be the first to arrive. Only the luttering pigeons in their highest flights brush them. training skyward they rise, in pompous thanks, to a alf-forgotten God.

They are topped by the Cross.

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THE FOOL

CHAPTER I.

The Star.

The Church of the Nativity was donning its Christmas dress. Being one of New York's most fashionable churches, it must dress accordingly. Through the chancel, down the aisles, trailed lavish wreaths of spicy evergreen. They looped themselves from pew to pew, they hung in long, graceful festoons above the arched windows, against the pulpit, high over the altar. The green of the decorations mingled with the colors shed by the afternoon light as it filtered through the purple and magenta and blue and gold of windows that had cost a fortune—each one a memorial from the wealthy to the wealthy. Throughout the nave arched the richly carved wood, here catching the soft flicker of color from the stained glass, there deepening to dusky shadow. The organist, having tried out a new offertory, was bringing his performance to a close with a last resonance of rich harmony, which thrilled through the stately spaces of the building. The deep tones of the organ, the glow of splendid color, the fragrance of evergreen, all wrought a symphony of beauty that played upon the senses.

As if to gather up all the beauty of the season and the hour, to set it forth in one splendid, glowing figure

that should symbolize it, stood the tree. It was Christmas eve of 1918, and the tree shone with more than its usual meaning. Not only did it stand for the eternal "Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men," but for a very especial and timely peace—one that had cost ten million lives to achieve. Never before had even the Church of the Nativity—and few congregations in America can boast as many names in the millionaire and multi-millionaire list—offered its people such a tree.

It towered. Its branches glittered, twinkled, radiated with countless tiny electric bulbs which shed their rainbow-hued lights upon the gilded balls, fruits, tinsel chains, gold leaves, trinkets of every conceivable shape. A shower of crystal dust had descended upon the branches, making them look as though caught in a blizzard of diamonds. On the floor beside the tree stood piles of parcels, gayly wrapped in tissue and tied with fat gay bows of ribbon, while all about was a litter of parcels still in the process of being "done up." Gifts, toys, ribbon, crimson tissue, "stickers" were scattered as if a hurricane had deposited them. The hurricane, in this case, was a group of parishioners who chatted more rapidly than they worked as they put their final touches to the tree.

"Oh-h-h-h!" groaned Mrs. Henry Gilliam, as she rose from stooping over a box of toys. "It's—it's—terrible—to work—like this!" She came up panting, her hand pressed to her side. Mrs. Gilliam was fat, forty, rich and self-satisfied, which implies that she was unused to manual labor of even a light variety.

"Won't hurt you, Mother. May help you reduce!" offered her daughter Daffodil from her high perch upon a ladder. "Dilly" Gilliam was no respecter of persons—even her mother. Being a young person of the rising—or risen—generation, she was, at twenty, wise, witty, cynical and confident, also worldly and material even beyond her elders—which is saying much. Physically, she was pretty, and, of course, did not hesitate to help out nature wherever she thought it advisable. Considering what had been spent upon her education, she was surprisingly ignorant and discourteous, particularly to her mother who, as she declared with entire frankness, "bored her to tears." Nature had endowed Dilly with pale gold hair like spun silk; with a skin like peaches and cream; with big blue eyes and a little arched mouth and a slip of a body. Had she been satisfied with nature's consummate handicraft, she might have moved through this world with the slender grace of a fairy escaped from some flower's cup. As it was, she must needs indulge in tangerine rouge, pencilled eyebrows, liquid powder and lipstick, till she resembled the wax figure in a hairdresser's window.

Mrs. Gilliam remained with her hand pressed against her side, and emitted faint moans, as though in a violent attack of heart disease. "I can't remember that I ever worked so hard a day in my life!" she groaned. "Surely I can't be expected to *kill* myself for the sake of that——Dilly, for pity's sake, pull down your skirt!" She broke off her lament to cry loudly, as a sudden turn of the head brought her where she caught the generous view of Dilly's nether limbs that was revealed as she

sat perched, with knees crossed, high upon the ladder.

The third worker cast a glance at the revelation and smiled a worldly smile. This was Mrs. Thornbury, a *divorcée* of thirty, and a good-looking one. Leila Thornbury was a smartly-dressed, smartly-mannered woman whose husband had been attracted by her perfect nose and a certain brittle fascination in her personality; he had left her a year later, having wearied of the nose and come to hate the brittleness. She was one of the women who are said to "have style" regardless of what the prevailing styles may be; she had a way of wearing her clothes, of dressing her hair (she never permitted her maid to attend to this duty), that were her own. But the charms that she possessed gave one the impression of being on the surface and no deeper. There was a restlessness about her, amounting almost to feverishness; a something never satisfied, always striving for a new sensation. Leila was the type of woman sure to be fascinating to many men and to be disliked proportionately by women. If for nothing else, they would have disliked her for her fur coat alone—a marvel in its collection of rare skins, such skins as are seldom to be found. Although Mrs. Gilliam and Dilly were both dressed in the height of expensive fashion, Mrs. Thornbury's coat outdistanced anything they wore. On its cost twenty families could easily have lived a year.

Mrs. Gilliam continued to frown upon her daughter's display of hosiery while she turned with a plaintive comment to Mrs. Thornbury.

"I don't know what skirts are coming to!" she observed anxiously.

"They're not coming to the ground, Mother, anyway. You can be sure of *that!*" responded the prompt Miss Daffodil, perking a toe and tapping a heel in optimistic spirit. Dilly had no overweening desire to see them come to the ground, as a matter of fact. Not while "Dad" signed the checks that paid for lace-insertion hosiery at fifteen dollars the pair!

Mrs. Gilliam shook her head and puckered her round face into a frown of profound care. "What *I* can't understand," she went on, "is why our young women want to go around looking like chorus girls!" If Mrs. Gilliam didn't really feel deeply disturbed at the new fashions, at least she felt it befitting, as a mother of a "flapper," to go on record in protest.

Mrs. Thornbury shrugged a pair of thinly elegant shoulders. It had cost her the sacrifice of many a pound of candy, of all sugar in tea and coffee, and tiresome hours of massage, to get her shoulders down to the point where their blades showed through her silk gown when she shrugged like that.

"Perhaps these modern young women that you complain of have noticed the kind of men that marry chorus girls," she responded succinctly. Leila Thornbury had made her own observations of this world—and had acted upon them.

"Salesmanship, Mother, begins with a willingness to show goods," came Dilly's pert pipe from the heights above.

Mrs. Gilliam groaned—with sincerity, this time. "Dilly! You're simply horrifying!" she cried. And,

helplessly, she almost besought her young worldling in a final desperate appeal: *"Pull down your skirt!"*

"I can't! That's all there is—there isn't any more!" Dilly demonstrated the brevity of the skirt in a futile tugging.

Mrs. Thornbury came forward, holding up two dolls which she had found still unboxed and unlabeled. "What are we going to do with *these?*" she demanded wearily. "I've packed dolls—and dolls—and dolls—and they're not done yet! I'm getting a frightful headache, and if I look another doll in the face I shall address her in profane language, I know!" She held the two poor helpless celluloid infants out by their petticoats with an upturned nose of loathing.

Mrs. Gilliam glanced sympathetically at her and turned to the profusion of toys and other gifts still unpacked and awaiting their boxes and wrappings. "Goodness knows!" she sighed. "Here we've been working for hours—simply hours—working our fingers to the bone"—she gazed compassionately at her own pudgy manicured fingers glistening with their crust of diamonds—"and we're nowhere near done yet!"

"I've two engagements before dinner, and I've got to go home and undress for the opera," added Mrs. Thornbury.

Dilly's plaint was added to these. *"I* gave up a dance for this!" she wailed, as she gingerly descended the tremulous ladder.

"A dance at this hour?" demanded her mother. The

afternoon dance was only then coming into high favor, and Mrs. Gilliam found it a breathless and futile race trying to keep up with the down-to-the-minute "stunts" of her daughter.

"People dance at any hour, Mother," Dilly replied with an air of superiority. Mother really was a fossil!

"What do they do it for?" persisted Mrs. Gilliam. In her day there had been other ways to spend the daylight hours!

"Oh, for something to do," sighed the *blasé* Dilly. Already she had found life a weary jog unless one drove at neck-breaking speed. "*We're* young and we've got to have life and gaiety—haven't we, Mrs. Thornbury?" She turned for sympathy where she was pretty sure of finding it.

"We've got to have something," Leila replied. "I don't know what it is, but I know we have to keep going to get it." Her brilliant, feverish gaze seemed to strain forward, as though seeking, perpetually seeking something—she did not know what. Some new sensation, some fresh quarry . . . . the huntress, Leila, to whom the hunt itself is all in all. Once let the prey be captured, and its charm has vanished . . . . .

Mrs. Gilliam assumed a self-righteous expression which doubled her fat chin and pursed her small round mouth. She wagged her head with what she deemed proper solemnity.

"But you all waste your time so dreadfully!" she declared. "I'm busy, too, I'm sure, but my life is given to the service of others!" She folded her be-jewelled

little fat hands virtuously and gazed floor-ward in a humility that was secretly the essence of self-approbation.

"What could be sweeter?" chirped the incorrigible Dilly. She, in turn, gazed heavenward in sinful mockery of her mother's pious *rôle*.

"Dilly! Nobody knows better than you that I've never had a selfish thought!" her mother rebuked her angrily. "Mr. Gilliam— — "

"Of the Gilliam Groceries, Inc.," put in the incorrigible.

"*Mr. Gilliam* says," persisted her mother witheringly, "*my husband* says—that I'*m far too good!*" She brought up with a defiant climax that reverberated down the hollow aisles.

Mrs. Thornbury broke in upon this little family discord. "We all agree with him, Mrs. Gilliam," she asserted charmingly, though what lay behind her narrowed glance one might only guess.

"Only yesterday I gave five hundred pounds of coffee and sugar to the Salvation Army!" the philanthropist went on, turning to Mrs. Thornbury, whose saccharine words and tone had mollified her.

Dilly observed, "And today Father jumped the price of sugar to thirty-two cents!" Whether this young woman possessed a heart of stone or of something more human, at any rate she could never be accused of hypocrisy.

"Now, Dilly!" Mrs. Thornbury attempted suavity.

Mrs. Gilliam turned upon her daughter savagely.

'Dilly!" she cried, powerless to refute the statement, but enraged. "One gets precious—precious little reward—I can tell you!" With a sudden gust of emotion she burst into tears. "And I try so hard to do good! I sent helpful thoughts from the Bible to all Mr. Gilliam's employes! And now they're on strike, and the man that got 'Be content with your wages,' is leading the strikers!" She smothered her tears, choked for an instant, and turned toward the box of toys, to conceal her overflowing emotion. "Where's the Star of Bethlehem?" she demanded.

"It doesn't work, Mother," Dilly replied, good-temperedly dropping the issue. She made for a huge box of candy from which the group had been filling small stockings of bobbinet. She dipped in, bringing forth a handful of gum drops, peppermints and chocolates.

"Pretty bum candy, but a girl must eat to live," she observed as she munched cheerfully. "Here, Mother —help yourself and sweeten existence—you, too, Leila." She scooped up more candy with a huge ladle which had been used in filling the stockings, and passed it to her co-laborers.

Solemnly they munched, disposing of a liberal amount of the Christmas tree candy, which they all agreed was "miserable stuff, but then——." Even Mrs. Thornbury indulged in one caramel. They were quite of the conviction that they were heavily laden toilers who had earned their reward of food.

"So tired—and hungry—and the church is getting cold, too," observed the weary Mrs. Gilliam with a shiver.

"Yes. I believe we're going to get that cold wave, in spite of the fact that the Weather Bureau predicted it," responded Mrs. Thornbury.

Indeed the thermometer had been rapidly falling during the afternoon, and it now barely grazed zero in its effort to keep its head up. The chill of late December was creeping in to the church, although a roaring fire in the furnace was doing its best to get ahead of the weather. Old Barnaby, the sexton, pottered about, closing a window which was not quite tight, investigating the fire, feeling of the great doors to make sure that they were not letting in a draught. He rubbed his hands as he walked, partly because of chill, partly in a self-satisfaction that he was properly attending to the needs of the wealthy parishioners who showed practical appreciation, in crisp paper form, of services rendered.

As Barnaby thrust his thin beak of a nose out the crack between the magnificent carved doors, he caught sight of a crowd upon the sidewalk. It was an unpleasant looking crowd; it wore shabby coats with turned-up collars, and ragged caps or battered hats, and its noses were various shades of blue, red and purple. It talked in harsh voices and thrust bare, chapped hands into its pockets.

"Now, then! No noise and disorder, do you hear?" Barnaby said as he drew the doors together with a smart bang and a pleasurable sense of duty performed. These rough fellows should not disturb his worthy parishioners, not while *he* was in charge! Barnaby pottered away, to look after the lockers and to make

ure that all was ready for the choir's robing to-morrow.

The sound of the talking outside had penetrated the aisles, however, in that moment of the door's opening. Mrs. Thornbury, turning, had caught a glimpse of the shabby group outside.

"Are those your husband's men—out by the front steps?" she inquired of Mrs. Gilliam.

"Oh, no! Those are people from the sweat shops. The furnace is under the grating, and they're trying to keep warm by it."

Again Leila shrugged the famously thin shoulders. Such a bore, these sweat shop people! the shrug might have said.

"These men are starving, I hear," Mrs. Gilliam went on. "They're on strike, you know. My husband says that starving serves them right!" She dropped the topic, as settled. "But what I can't make out is—what on earth *is* the matter with the Star of Bethlehem? It doesn't shine as it ought to!"

"Oh, the usual!" casually replied Dilly. "Whoever heard of the lights working on a Christmas tree?"

Mrs. Gilliam picked up the Star where it lay upon the table of littered gifts. It was large and magnificent, studded throughout its five long rays with the most brilliant of paste diamonds.

"But surely this one *must* work!" she declared. "Mrs. Tice had it made to order—of Parisian diamonds! It cost a hundred dollars."

Dilly came forward and took the perplexing star from her hand. "All right, then. Let's make it

work. If it cost that much, it's got to shine, whether it wants to or not." With it in her hand she started once more up the ladder, which lurched, rocked and wobbled as she attempted to run up the steps.

"Wow!" Dilly grabbed for a hold upon it, almost letting fall the star as she strove for a more secure foothold. "Hold the ladder, Mother! It behaves as if it had been mixing drinks!"

"Dilly! What do you know about mixing drinks!"

To this the incorrigible did not reply, but proceeded lightly up the ladder while her mother held it firmly in position. Safe at the top, Dilly waved the star like a signal of victory.

Mrs. Thornbury, having bravely returned to the ranks of labor, strengthened by the one caramel which she had permitted herself to indulge in, now held up the two dolls, wrapped in white tissue and bound with yards of dainty Christmas ribbon. "There! They're done! I'm half dead—maybe two-thirds—and there *can't* be any more presents!" She rose and started to get her fur coat. "I'd give my left hand for a cigarette," she observed plaintively as she lifted the richly heavy garment.

"Not here!" Mrs. Gilliam exclaimed.

"I don't know why not. We've had almost everything else."

"Mother's so *mid-Victorian!*" Dilly put in protestingly. "And ministers are finding they've got to do *something* to make church-going attractive! What do we get out of it now? I've heard of preachers who go in for dances and movies, and they draw crowds, too!

Naturally! Who wouldn't go to church to get a squint at Douglas Fairbanks?" While talking, she had been working with energy at the star, and now it hung aloft, its paste diamonds glittering at the topmost point of the lofty tree. "There!" she cried triumphantly. "I'm through!"

"Then come down!" commanded her mother, whose fat and feeble arms were weary with their efforts to steady the ladder.

"Believe me, I'm glad to get off this thing." Dilly wobbled her way to the bottom. "When I think I broke an engagement with the best fox-trotter in New York to do a shimmy with a ladder——!" She sprang lightly to the floor.

From the side door Barnaby was again entering the church. His small bent frame seemed smaller and more bent than ever under the load of parcels which he carried.

"Look at Mr. Barnaby!" Dilly cried, aghast at the prospect of more present to be attended to.

"*Are* they for the tree?" cried the equally aghast Mrs. Thornbury.

The little old sexton wagged his head with satisfaction, quite as if he had been the donor. "Yes—more presents!" he replied proudly. "Mrs. Tice brought them. She and Mr. Jerry Goodkind." With a relieved sigh he deposited his burden on the chancel steps. "They're just coming in," he added, and turned away, trotting down to the door to open it for the newcomers.

Barnaby was conscious of nothing save that some more of his rich and lavish parishioners were arriving and must be served as they expected to be served. But, in uttering the name of Jerry Goodkind, he had caused a thrill little short of electricity to pass through the group beside the tree. Mrs. Gilliam suddenly puffed out with excitement, and clucked to her offspring like a busy hen:

"Dilly! Dilly!" she whispered, endeavoring not to let Mrs. Thornbury hear, and quite unconscious that her whisper in the silent aisle was louder than a shout elsewhere. "Dilly! Where's your vanity bag, child? Powder your nose—quick—*there!* You've got a dab on the right side—no, the left! Hurry up—here's my mirror."

Dilly, likewise electrified, had snatched her vanity bag from the communion rail where it had been lying, and was searching desperately for her mirror the while she dabbed white puffs upon chin and nose. She added a touch of the lipstick—the Cupid's bow was not quite as arched as it should be——

And Mrs. Thornbury merely turned, her eyes upon the door. But all the fever, the restless, shallow passion of her insatiate nature blazed in her green eyes as Jerry Goodkind entered. One glance they exchanged—and in that glance lay understanding.

CHAPTER II.

An Eligible Bachelor.

Jerry Goodkind was one of the most eligible bachelors in all New York—that is, in the New York to which the Gilliams, Mrs. Thornbury and their friends belonged. To them, indeed, it was the only New York that existed. In it young Goodkind moved as a planet surrounded by feminine satellites. Daughters cast their most entrancing eyes in his direction, fond and eager mammas beseiged him with invitations and charming attentions of all kinds. Yachting parties, week-ends, dinners, dances, *thés-dansants*, house parties, were devised for the sake of including this most desirable Jerry in the list. He was thirty-five, sleek, well-groomed, fairly good-looking and perfectly satisfied with himself. His most engaging point was a perpetual smile which he used to express every emotion—good-temper, irony, dislike, or friendliness were all conveyed by that flash of white teeth and of dark eyes. He was never seen by the general public to wear anything but an easy, careless surface; but beneath it lay iron. He could be very ugly when he wished, and he was always sufficiently determined to get what he wanted, though he almost invariably got it by showing the urbane surface. His flashes of ugly temper were reserved for special—very special—occasions.

"Afternoon — afternoon — hello, Dilly!" he cried

lightly as he entered behind Mrs. Tice, for whom old Barnaby was obsequiously holding open the door—Mrs. Tice, according to Barnaby's classification, was much too rich to open a door for herself. "See I'm just in time to pass judgment on the tree! Pretty good job you've made, I should say." He drew forth an eyeglass and playfully studied the decorations in mock critical mood.

"Hello, everybody!" Mrs. Tice was remarking at the same time, as she bustled forward. Mrs. Tice had just entered middle age, and was the sort that refuses to shut the door behind. Her wealth, which had given her an air of great authority, had made it possible for her to look a smartly-dressed young matron. The truth was that she clung to youth in an ever-lessening hope of "keeping" her husband. Beneath the air of authority was something cowed, worried, unhappy. Her surface, however, was brisk and dashing. All that she aimed to be rang in her "Hello!"

Mrs. Tice glanced back toward the door. "There are a lot of dirty foreigners blocking the sidewalk!" she said. "I had to crowd my way in—fancy!" She brushed the sleeve of her coat with a fastidious disdain in recollection of the unpleasant contact. "What are such people doing there?"

Barnaby rubbed his hands as if in apology and explained once more that these were the strikers trying to warm themselves at the grating.

"Then let them go somewhere else and warm themselves!" exclaimed Mrs. Tice in a burst of annoyance; at which unintentional *double-entendre* Jerry sup-

ressed a whoop of mirth, clapping his hand over his
outh.

"Ladies never say such things!" he told her, shaking
finger at her in teasing Jerry-ism.

She flushed crimson as the others laughed. "How
bsurd! Of course I didn't mean any such thing!" she
rotested sputteringly. "But there must be missions,
r something, for them! Really, I don't mean to be un-
ind, but it's impossible for them to block our entrance
o the *church!*"

Mr. Barnaby was removing her coat while she spoke,
nd now he started up the ladder to attend to the star,
Mrs. Gilliam having whispered to him that it would not
ight. While he busied himself at the top of the lad-
er, the group below took up their usual kind of
hatter.

"We didn't hope to see *you* here, Mr. Goodkind," ob-
erved Leila Thornbury. The glance of understanding
which had passed between her and Jerry had been
arefully extinguished, like a dangerous flame, for the
bservation of other eyes.

"I met him in front of Tiffany's!" put in Mrs. Tice
with an inflection and a stress upon the last word
which carried profound meaning.

Jerry shrugged, and his perpetual smile flashed in
blithe response to the inuendo. "The most dangerous
corner in New York!" he observed gayly.

"And I lured him here by mentioning that Clare
Jewett was helping us with the tree," continued Mrs.
Tice.

Dilly was bound to have a finger in *that* pie. "Some-

body page Mr. Gilchrist!" she cried with imperturbable wickedness, and met the flash of Jerry's smile challengingly. A sultry shadow, like a threat of storm, crossed Leila's face at the sound of Clare Jewett's name, but in the midst of the general banter nobody saw it.

"Dilly!" cried her mother, shocked as usual. "What a way of saying that Clare is engaged to the assistant rector!" Having reproved her offspring as behooved her, she turned and appealed to Jerry with portly pride in that same incorrigible child. "Dilly's looking well today, isn't she, Mr. Goodkind?" she asked insinuatingly. "Dear me, she is so young, and so——"

"So fresh," Mr. Goodkind took up the words.

"Oh, boy!" observed the incorrigible.

Mrs. Tice busied herself about the pile of her own fresh parcels. "Do come and see what I've got for the girls of the bible class!" she called to the others, snipping cords and rustling papers with a tremendous air of busy-ness.

"Testaments?" drawled Leila with a weary glance.

"That's just it—I haven't!" replied the other. "Bibles are so bromidic! I want to give them something they can *really use!* And it's so hard to think of presents for those girls; they've got everything!" Proudly she produced a small box which she had now unwrapped. "Guess how I've solved the problem!" She held the box aloft.

"I can't, I'm sure!" drawled Mrs. Thornbury.

"I haven't an idea!" added Mrs. Gilliam.

"I'm dying to know!" sighed Dilly.

Impressively Mrs. Tice opened the box and drew forth the gift. "Vanity cases!" she cried triumphantly. "And of sterling silver!"

Dilly seized the dainty case from her hand and fairly cooed over it. "How ducky!" she murmured.

"Charming!" came Mrs. Thornbury's drawl.

"An inspiration!" chorused Mrs. Gilliam.

Dilly turned to Jerry, showing him the treasure, explaining its feminine mysteries. "All complete—look! Lip-stick, powder, and some nice, red rouge!"

Jerry's flash, now cynical, met her. "To put on before you pray?" he inquired.

"Precisely," she answered demurely. "To put on—before we—*prey!*"

"Well, good people," Mrs. Thornbury broke in upon the small talk. "This is where I leave you." She fell to gathering up her immense coat of superb fur.

"Oh, Mrs. Thornbury—must you?" cried Mrs. Gilliam with the air of one bereft. As a matter of fact, she was happily measuring her own increased opportunity in Dilly's behalf, which would come with Mrs. Thornbury's departure.

"I've done my 'one kind deed' today," replied the *divorcée.* "And I've an engagement for dinner." She was struggling with the coat.

"Permit me." Jerry dashed forward to assist. "Some coat!" he remarked as he lifted the silky weight.

"Yes....Thanks...." Leila responded aloud. Then, as Jerry adjusted the voluptuous collar, her whisper flashed back to him, over her shoulder:

"At seven?"

He leaned closer, lingering over the collar, assisting her to fasten it at the throat.

"Make it half-past," his own whisper replied. "I can hardly be there before. But *then*...."

There was another glance exchanged—a glance that it would take paragraphs to translate. Such a glance as only Leila Thornbury's queer, wicked, entrancing, long, narrow green eyes could give; such as only Jerry Goodkind's darting smile could amply answer.

But it had all occurred in a flitting second. Leila turned to the others:

"See you all tomorrow at the Christmas service. Goodbye, everybody!" She nodded brightly and was off. "And, Mr. Goodkind," she added with a glance over her shoulder. "Miss Jewett's wrapping things—in the choir-room!" Her eyes said what only Jerry might interpret; but a general laugh at the mention of Clare Jewett's name rippled over the group, as Leila vanished.

Old Barnaby had made his shaky way down the perilous ladder, having adjusted the star and its wires. "I'll just go outside and try those lights," he said, and disappeared. The group of parishioners were left to their gossip. Mrs. Gilliam lowered her voice confidentially.

"Leila has an engagement for dinner, but you notice she didn't say with whom," she observed. "For *my* part *I* don't think they ought to allow divorced women in the church at all!"

Mrs. Tice assumed an air of virtue. "Anyway, the church *won't* marry them!" she responded.

"*That's* the trouble!" said Mrs. Gilliam.

"The church *will* let 'em give stained glass windows, ıough!" commented the observant Dilly, tweaking a ıumb in the direction of an especially magnificent indow, a gift representing thousands of dollars, the esign of a nation-famous artist.

Mrs. Gilliam refused to hear her worldy-wise daugh-er's impertinence. "Where does Leila get all her ıoney?" she whispered.

Mrs. Tice knew. "Billy settled for thirty-six thou-and a year!"

Jerry Goodkind's flashing smile had been following he discussion with growing amusement. "Think of etting thirty-six thousand a year out of munitions!" ıe observed. "Gee, what a lot of lives that coat must ıave cost!"

Everybody laughed at the amusing idea. The laugh, ıowever, broke off suddenly at the entrance of an lderly man who came forward to join the group. With smile of the friendliest greeting he walked slowly n from a side door—a distinguished man, indeed, in ıis clerical garb, with his fine features, his kindly mile, his snowy hair.

"Why, here's Dr. Wadham!" cried Dilly.

The others all greeted him with like surprise. "We ıidn't know you were back!" Mrs. Tice exclaimed, at which Jerry confessed his sin of omission of church-going: "*I* didn't know you'd been away, Doctor!"

The clergyman's hand went out warmly to each in succession. He was a man well past sixty, with the glow of a kind heart shining in his eyes. But a keen

observer might have read, behind this kindliness, a total lack of actual experience with life in its realities. He was a very pleasant and plausible person—plausible because he believed implicitly in himself, and pleasant largely because he had never known any sort of discomfort.

"Yes—ten days I've been away," he told them. "Attending a Conference on the Proper Use of Eucharistic Candles. Its a subject on which I feel *rather* strongly. It's pleasant to see you, Mrs. Tice. And Miss Daffodil."

"Isn't Dilly looking *wonderful?*" put in that most diligent of press agents, her mamma.

"*Quite* wonderful! . . . .And what a beautiful tree! The star lights up, I suppose?"

"Well, we have hopes!" sighed Dilly.

"Don't let me interrupt you good workers," continued Dr. Wadham with a beam of approbation upon them all. "I've only dropped in to keep an appointment with the wardens."

"We're all through," Mrs. Gilliam explained, "except putting these gifts under the tree." She bustled about the task. "Miss Jewett will be here any minute with hers," she added with a glance toward the choir room where Clare Jewett was at work. "The star is *real* imitation diamonds," she continued. "A gift from Mrs. Tice."

Mrs. Tice came forward. "Speaking of gifts, Doctor——"

"Yes, dear lady?"

"My husband wanted me to have a little talk with

ou about his check." She paused for encouragement, ading it a trifle difficult to convey her husband's mes-ge. "You know, he promised five thousand dollars to eautify the parlor of the parish house."

Dr. Wadham, a born diplomat, sensing trouble in ie air, suavely returned, "Oh, yes indeed!"

"And since then," Mrs. Tice went on hesitantly, well—frankly, Doctor, John was very much upset bout last Sunday's sermon. Mr. Gilchrist preached rom the text about the rich man entering the King-om of Heaven."

Dr. Wadham gave a slight start. Young Daniel Gil-hrist was the assistant rector, and had been left in harge of the church in the old clergyman's absence. Gilchrist had a brilliant and magnetic personality as vell as an unusual gift for public speaking; but this vas not the first time that he had given offense to arishioners. His ideas were considered "radical" and ie did not employ Dr. Wadham's discretion in ex-ressing opinions. There was a suggestion of nervous-ess in the latter's voice, but he responded, with his nvariable tact:

"Always a trifle dangerous, such a topic. The rich nan.... the Kingdom of Heaven.... yes, dangerous, trifle so—ahem...."

"Yes. And last Sunday it seemed as if he were lirecting *all* his remarks at John. We're in the first ew, you know, and John says he doesn't like to com-lain, but there's getting to be altogether too much of his—Bolshevism. John says the preachers are more han half to blame for the present social unrest. I

heard the sermon, and I agree with John that some o it was positively insulting!"

"Mr. Gilchrist is young," observed the clergyman i soothing tones.

Jerry had been hovering about the closed door o the choir room, behind which Clare Jewett was wrap ping gifts, restlessly wondering why she didn't com out and whether it would be advisable to make a de scent upon the room. He now strolled forward towar the speakers, catching their last words.

"Mr. Gilchrist is a nut!" He put in.

Mrs. Tice nodded. "Do you know what he said, Doc tor?" she went on to the clergyman. "He said all thi 'decking the church' was making an accomplice of God He said we couldn't take credit to ourselves for return ing a small portion of our *ill-gotten gains!*"

"*Small portion!*" groaned the worthy Mrs. Gilliam "When I've just given away five hundred pounds o coffee!"

Mrs. Tice continued her report of the young assist ant's dire doing in the absence of his superior. "H said charity wasn't giving away what you didn't want!"

"It was *good* coffee, too!" wailed Mrs. Gilliam. "Ou second best!"

"Of course, what John really objected to was th reference to rents—to charging clerks and bookkeeper more than they could pay for 'wretched little flats.' John says he doesn't come here to be told how to ru his business!"

"Quite right! And I don't pay seven thousand dol lars a year to hear my husband's coffee roasted!"

At Mrs. Gilliam's all-unconscious *bon mot* a laugh urst forth—to a great extent, the mere nervous relief rom tension. The sharpest tension was that of Dr. Vadham. This young assistant of his—what was he etting the Church of the Nativity into? The old lergyman welcomed the relief that laughter brought, nd joined in it.

"Well, you understand what I mean!" sputtered Mrs. Gilliam.

Dr. Wadham soothed, as always. "We understand, ny dear lady."

"Personally, I'm very fond of Mr. Gilchrist," she added. "His father had stock in our stores. But I *don't* hink he's a good influence. This used to be a really *exclusive* church. Now, whenever Mr. Gilchrist preaches, there's such a crush of undesirable people n the galleries you can hardly get into your pew. We don't have that trouble with Dr. Wadham!"

At this moment there was a movement on the part of the choir-room door. The knob trembled, rattled, as if someone were struggling with it; then a young woman appeared, her hands encumbered by the pile of parcels that she carried.

The other women, absorbed in their discussion, did not see Clare Jewett as she paused in the doorway, arrested by the talk. She was a tall, slender girl of twenty-eight; her flawlessly tailored brown suit suggested thought and taste rather than money. Her figure was graceful; her face was more than pretty, and more than ordinarily intelligent. A high, finely-formed brow; eyes wide-apart and dark; well-cut fea-

tures, less classic than individual; lustrous folds of heavy bronze hair showing beneath the smart but extremely simple brown velvet hat—altogether, the type of woman who is said to have "personality." But there was a suspicion of hardness about the face, an overfirm set of the delicately molded chin; a glance not soft, though full of the charm of an alert mind.

"Mr. Gilchrist was such a promising young man!" she heard Mrs. Tice saying.

"So rich and so happy!" added Mrs. Gilliam.

Dilly addressed Jerry teasingly. "And in love!"

"He's still rich," said Dr. Wadham, "and in love, and, I think, he's still happy."

Jerry, hands in pockets, gave an irritated shrug. "I've told you, he's a nut!"

"I wonder if that's it!" sighed Mrs. Gilliam reflectively. "Don't laugh! He wasn't like this before he went overseas as chaplain. Is it possible he was *gassed* —or something?"

Clare, having listened in silence, now came forward. "Here's another armful of presents!" she said briskly, depositing them under the tree.

Dr. Wadham turned to her with an affectionate smile. "Oh, how do you do, Miss Jewett?"

Jerry started impulsively toward her. "Hello, Clare! This is a——"

"A surprise!" intercepted Mrs. Gilliam with irony. "Ha! And you've been watching that choir-room door for the last half hour!" Her jealous maternal eye had missed none of Jerry's eagerness.

Clare turned to her, having greeted them all with

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her charming smile. "I'm afraid we'll have to call Mr. Barnaby. There are so many packages."

"Can't I help?" offered the rector.

"Will you, Doctor? And Mr. Hinkle's in there praying for someone to consult about the Christmas music," Clare told him.

Dr. Wadham thought the matter of music was settled. "I told Mr. Hinkle the choir had better begin by singing, 'Peace, Perfect Peace, with the Loved Ones Far Away.'" he explained, at which Dilly emitted a giggle and chanted softly, "My Wife's Gone to the Country."

"Dilly!" came her mother's scandalized whisper.

Mrs. Tice reverted to the matter of her husband's gift. "And, Doctor—shall I tell Mr. Tice that you'll speak to Mr. Gilchrist?"

"Yes," the clergyman replied deliberately. "I think you may even tell him," he added, "that's why we're here today." Bowing to the group, he departed, and his slow, measured footsteps died along the passage that led to his study.

With the departure of Dr. Wadham the tree trimmers made ready to depart also. *"Do* hurry, Dilly!" buzzed Mrs. Gilliam, and Mrs. Tice looked for her fur. "Can't I drive you home?" she asked.

"Thank you so much!" Mrs. Gilliam accepted with promptness. "Goodbye, Miss Jewett. Goodbye, Mr. Goodkind. We must arrange for you to come up to dinner as soon as the holidays are over. Dilly, say boodbye to Mr. Goodkind!"

"Goodbye-ee!" waved the cheerful Dilly.

Her mother turned for a moment to speak to old Barnaby who was at that moment entering.

"Oh—Mr. Barnaby! How about the lights? Did you find out what the trouble is?"

"I think the trouble's outside."

"You'll be sure to fix it?"

Mr. Barnaby nodded obsequiously.

"And will you put us in the car?" asked Mrs. Tice, and again old Barnaby nodded, and followed the ladies to the front door.

"I dread going through that mob outside!" shuddered Mrs. Tice, as the mere thought of the unclean persons whose sleeves had brushed her brought a wave of unpleasant sensation.

Old Barnaby, pushing his thin little body ahead of the ladies, made a path for them to the waiting motor-car. The shivering persons—scantly dressed, scantly fed, red—and blue-nosed, chapped, beating hands and stamping feet—were still huddled over the grating, while an ever-increasing gale sang shrilly from the north and drove the thermometer lower, ever lower.

"Ugh!" shuddered Mrs. Tice again, as she noted the shockingly dirty garments of the persons, heard their rough mumblings, sprinkled here and there with words more expressive than elegant.

And so, shuddering at the mob, the while she called back her *goodbyes* and *Merry Christmases* to the pair left behind, Mrs. Tice, accompanied by Mrs. Gilliam and Dilly, made her way through the huddling, grumbling group and was safely clapped into her softly gray-cushioned car.

She drank a long, luxurious whiff of the rare hot-house roses that hung in the silver flower-holder. "Just to blow away the memory of those dirty people!" she said, and leaned back in delicious comfort to be whirled away.

CHAPTER III.

Clare.

Clare Jewett realized that she was about to be left alone with Jerry Goodkind—and urealized what that would mean. He would propose to her again.

He was always proposing to her. In those few still moments, while Jerry was following the departing ladies to the door, while Clare waited in the soft hush of the chancel, her situation swept through her mind like an incredibly swift drama—and ended with the groping wonder: what would the outcome be?

Clare was alone in the world. Her father, the only close relative she had ever known, had died the year before, leaving her financially almost stranded. He had made a fortune, had lived accordingly, and it was not until after his death that it was discovered he had lost it. Clare had been brought up as the child of wealth. She had been taught by the most expensive governesses, had travelled over Europe, had been dressed in all the lavish array of exquisite embroidery, silk, furs, laces and ribbons that is accounted the share of the rich little girl. She had been shampooed and manicured by her own maid, had known the luxury of throwing slippers and hats and dresses over the floor in the assurance that they would be neatly put away for her. She had been indulged in every whim—a magnificent riding horse, a squash court at home, a

yacht which she captained herself, golf links laid out to suit her because she didn't like the links of her country club . . . . anything, everything . . . .

After which, the deluge. Left alone, to face the world. Left poor. And with no training to meet any difficulty. She no more knew how to do without abundant money than without food. She had to have this, she had to have that. To a vast extent, as she thought, she curtailed expenses; took an apartment with two maids, sold the yacht, the horse. But she no more knew the meaning of real economy than does an infant in arms. It demands what it wants and expects to get it. So did Clare.

She belonged to the extravagant social circle to which Mrs. Gilliam and her friends belonged, and the expenditure required to remain there had already almost swamped her in debt. By day she floundered in the midst of unpaid bills, by night she lay awake over them, then rose to fling herself feverishly into still heavier expenditure in order to forget her worries.

But although she belonged to this set of spenders by birth and training, Clare was, in a way, in it but not of it. She had a certain life of her own, apart. She was a woman of finer intellect, more exquisite taste; in general, of a deeper culture and trend of thought than the women whom she knew as her companions. There flashed now and then, behind her more superficial charms, behind the hardness with which her worldly training had encrusted her, a more profound beauty—that of the spirit. It had been said of Clare, by the perceptive, that she had the capacity for better

things. That was the reason, no doubt, why the young clergyman, Daniel Gilchrist, had found in her the woman of his heart; and why, in turn, she had given her love to him. She had, for some time, been engaged to Gilchrist—heir to a large property—and she didn't intend to listen to Jerry Goodkind's persistent offer of marriage.

But within Clare's spirit was warfare—fiercer and deeper than she guessed. To be sure, the finer traits contended for their rights; but the harder, more worldly qualities fought powerfully for command over her life. Dimly she sensed this battle; and it was because of it that she now stood tense as she waited for Jerry. He had nodded his last goodbye to the departing ladies; Barnaby had closed the door and pottered away; with his brilliant, hard, determined smile Jerry was returning up the aisle, toward her——

"Clare!" he said. He said it as though he meant a great deal more.

With a nervous gulp which she tried to conceal, she attempted to be lightly casual.

"It's funny to find you in church!" she said.

"Why? My father's the senior warden."

She laughed as she took up a Christmas parcel. "Whatever else you inherit, Jerry, it's not likely to be religion!" she observed.

Jerry met frankness with frankness. "Religion doesn't trouble the old man much," he said, "except Sundays. What I came here for was—to see you!" He brought up before her with his hands in his pockets—a characteristic posture—and his brilliant dark

eyes with their vivid smile seemed boring into hers, as though seeking to know the depths of her thoughts.

Clare halted before replying, her eyes on the floor, her hand nervously tossing the tassel of her sash. "Why did—you come—to see me?" she asked at length, still with her eyes upon the floor.

"You've been avoiding me." He kept his glance riveted upon her face, as if to force her eyes to meet his. They did, at length; but immediately they shifted and she spoke with an effort at lightness.

"Nonsense! Come help me with these parcels!"

"I want to talk to you." He did not stir.

She faced him now. "That's just it, Jerry. You always want to talk to me and it's always about something I don't want to hear."

"Why not, Clare?"

She answered him with sureness: "I'm in love with someone else!"

He shrugged, and his smile became more brilliant, more flashing, and deeply ironic. "You're *what?*" he demanded in mock amazement. His face drew near to hers.

She looked into it defiantly, met its mockery, repeated her words with a firmed conviction. "I'm in love with *someone else!*"

Jerry's face came even closer. "You're in love with Clare Jewett!" he retorted.

"You're very rude. I'm *engaged* to Mr. Gilchrist, and he loves me, and believes in me, and your sense of decency and fair play——"

"Inherited from my father?"

"——should keep you from proposing to a woman who's going to marry——"

"You're not going to marry—Mr. Gilchrist." There was an almost insolent assurance in Jerry's statement. With an *insouciant* movement he fell back, lounging against the ladder. "What's the use bluffing?" he went on. "We've known each other since childhood. You know I'm not going to give up anything I want because it belongs to somebody else. And I know you are not going to give up what *you* want—comfort and luxury—for a crazy man who wears his collar hind-side before!"

"Jerry!" she cried reproachfully.

He paid no heed to the reproach. "Now that's admitted, let's go on," he proceeded impertinently.

"Mr. Gilchrist isn't exactly poverty-stricken!" she put in with a show of indignation. Her dark eyes flashed anger back at him; but behind their anger there was a certain anxiety visible—the same that made her long, slim, aristocratic hands so ceaselessly busy, that caused her delicately arched foot to tap from time to time.

"No," Jerry admitted easily, "he isn't. He got quite a lot of property from his father. You like him, and when you said 'yes,' you thought you were getting somebody you liked, and all the rest of it, too! But something's gone wrong with Gilchrist and you know it!"

"Why do you say that?" The indignation ill concealed the worried lines in Clare's finely cut face.

"Because, if you didn't before, you heard this after-

noon. I saw you standing in the door. And I'm going to tell you a few things more!"

"I don't want to listen!"

"Maybe—but you will! Do you know that your young trouble-hunter has given away nearly one-tenth of his capital in three months?"

Clare's head tossed like that of a mettlesome horse. "No, and I don't believe it!" she flung back in Jerry's face.

His smile, the smile of the torturer who enjoys watching his victim writhe, flashed still more brilliantly. "All right; ask my father!" he cried. "The old man had his money in trust! Gilchrist won't touch his income from Gilliam Groceries, because they're profiteering, and he's preaching such anarchy that both wardens are coming this afternoon to complain to Dr. Wadham! I don't want you to throw yourself away on a raving bug!" he wound up, more serious now.

"And your advice is——" began Clare with satire.

"Marry me!" he flashed back. "I'm a nice fellow, too—and I can give you what you really care about. You're over your ears in debt, without any chance of paying up—or cutting down. And you are, shall we say, twenty-nine in October? I know what it cost you when your father died, and you had to come down a peg. You don't want to keep on coming down—do you?"

Clare turned away, with an affectation of disgust and contempt. "And so—you advise me to marry you?"

"Yes."

She paused, then with a sharp turn that brought her once more facing him, she demanded: "Knowing all I *do* know about you?" Her eyes met his squarely, and her tone bore heavy significance.

Jerry shrugged. "I don't see how *that* concerns you."

"It proves you don't love me."

"I want you, and I'm offering marriage to get you."

"You haven't said one word of love."

"I've said, 'What's the use bluffing'?" Jerry retorted. Sentimentality was not in his line, his manner implied. "I'm no movie hero," he went on, "and no crazy dreamer, either. I'm a little shop-worn, perhaps—maybe, a little soiled—but I'm sane, and I'm solvent. You're good-looking, and smart, and a lady. You'll help my standing and I'll help your credit. For the rest, we needn't bother each other too much. . . . . What do you say?"

In his succinct phrases Jerry had summed up the situation. He was at least honest; he made no sentimental pretense. He wasn't madly in love with Clare —or anyone else. He was far too "shop-worn" for that. But he realized the advantages of becoming head of a dignified establishment, and there wasn't another woman in his set who could, in his shrewd estimation, so grace the other end of his table as could Clare Jewett. She had beauty, charm, beyond the ordinary; her social position had always been impregnable; and her distinctive personality, a certain superior quality of mind, lifted her subtly above the rank and file of the "society" women he knew.

But to Clare, at that hour, the frankness of his statement was repulsive. At his question, "What do you say?" she broke out angrily:

"I say, that it's *revoltingly* sordid!"

For a long moment Jerry, in silence, held her eyes. Then, "All right!" he retorted. With maintained *insouciance* he took out his watch, studied it, and spoke deliberately. "You think it's sordid at 3:45 on Christmas Eve. Well, keep your ears and your mind open, and see how you feel in the morning. My telephone's six nine four two Rhinelander—and this is the last time I shall ask you!" He walked toward the door.

He had reached it—had his hand upon the knob—when Clare spoke. She had been watching him depart in angry silence, but at the instant of his going some impulse sought to halt him.

'Wait!" she called. He turned back. With a forced defiance she cried:

"Whatever you believe of me, I love Mr. Gilchrist!"

"Rhinelander six nine four two," repeated Jerry, coolly.

"And what's more, I'm going to marry him!" The strain behind her defiance was still more evident—as though she were striving with all her might to convince not only Jerry but herself.

His coolness was imperturbable, his smile increasingly gay. 'Rhinelander six nine four two!"

Her slim hands were clinched. "Jerry, I think you are the most detestable person I've ever known in my life!" she cried furiously; so furiously that he broke into laughter.

"I shall never speak to you again! I vow it!"

"Rhinelander—six-nine-four-two!" he sang over his shoulder, and he was gone.

Humiliated and fuming, Clare found herself alone. Her eyes looked black, their pupils dilated; an angry tear trembled on their long lashes; her lips quivered. For a moment she stood without moving, numb with anger; then, flinging down the parcels which she had absently picked up, she turned quickly and started toward the door. She brought up face to face with Dr. Wadham who was re-entering.

"Why! Why, Miss Jewett——" he began in mild surprise, seeing her agitation. "What can be——"

Clare broke in. "Oh, I'm tired! I—I'm nervous, Doctor Wadham! I—I'm not feeling quite well. I want to finish up and go home!" Without further words she dashed toward the choir-room for her wraps.

Dr. Wadham stood looking after her, studying the matter. Certain surmises flickered through his mind. Then, stooping, he picked up the parcels she had scattered, and placed them in a neat pile beneath the tree.

CHAPTER IV

Battle Begins.

"Mr. Goodkind to see you, Dr. Wadham. Shall I show him into your study?"

"Yes, yes, at once, Barnaby. Tell him I will be there directly." The rector gave a critical glance here and there about the church, making sure that it was suitably adorned for the great festival, then hastened through the passage to his large and luxurious study where Mr. Goodkind, Jerry's father, awaited him.

George Goodkind, father of the dashing and eligible bachelor, was a man of about the Doctor's own age, but of a vastly different background. Whereas the gentle clergyman had always known comfort and prosperity, this friend and parishioner had known the lack of both—and he now rejoiced and was exceedingly glad in the vast smiling of the gods upon his later years. He was the familiar type of successful, likable business man—brisk and economical of time, but, unless his interests were involved, extremely amiable. He did what he conceived to be his duty by his family, his community, and his God, and felt that all three should appreciate it.

Dr. Wadham received him cordially, with warmly extended hand. "Ah—Mr. Goodkind! You're early for our appointment." He offered his own most luxurious chair, deep and overstuffed, and seated himself oppo-

site. Heavy furniture, hosts of books, pictures, potted plants, a richly carved antique writing table, and oriental rugs, made the large room beautiful. It was the room of a man of cultivated tastes and a love for extreme comfort.

"I wanted to get here early," Goodkind explained as they settled down for a talk. "Walked out of a meeting. I don't like letting religion interfere with business, but I wanted to get here before Benfield. It's about young Gilchrist."

Dr. Wadham strove to conceal a nervousness which was creeping upon him. This young assistant of his seemed to have done a deal of up-stirring in his absence!

"Benfield said he was coming too, and I've only a few minutes before he gets here. Did you know that Gilchrist proposes to preach a Christmas sermon about the strike?"

"What strike?" inquired the dazed Dr. Wadham.

"This garment strike. He announced his subject from the pulpit, and Benfield's furious."

What more had happened during his ten days of absence? the clergyman was inwardly demanding. "But Mr. Benfield isn't interested in clothing!" he mildly protested.

"No, but he's invested heavily in my West Virginia coal mines, and down there we're on the verge of the biggest walk-out in our history. You see what I mean?"

Dr. Wadham, although he was the gentle clergyman interested in Eucharistic Candles, was also, in

"Clare, won't you listen?"

ome measure, a man of the world. He put two and wo together. "Yes," he replied.

Goodkind went on. "The labor problem's none of he church's business. Or any outsider's business. t's a worrisome subject, and there's no good stirring t up. That's what you want to tell Gilchrist!"

"I have told him—frequently."

"And what's the answer?"

"He says every problem ought to be the church's business, and that until the church becomes a power in ive issues, it isn't a power in life!"

Goodkind "humphed!" "He won't listen to reason?"

"No."

"Then he'll have to listen to something else." Goodkind's fist, the fist of a man of quick decisions and equally quick action, came down upon the study table, making the handsome bronze pieces of the desk-set jump. "If he persists about this Christmas sermon——" he was beginning, when Barnaby's thin beak appeared in the doorway.

Goodkind broke off impatiently. "Well—what is it?" he demanded.

Barnaby rubbed his hands apologetically, as always. "There's a man outside the church wants to see Mr. Gilchrist, and I thought he might be here." He addressed Dr. Wadham.

"What kind of a man?" asked Goodkind, used to taking the initiative.

"A poor man. I think he's a Jew."

"Mr. Gilchrist isn't here. I don't know where he is," Dr. Wadham put in.

"I told him I thought Mr. Gilchrist was out. But the man won't go away. I wanted to ask, had I better send for the police?"

"Oh, I wouldn't do that!" The pacifying diplomacy of Dr. Wadham stepped to the fore.

Barnaby bowed, but with grumbling. "Then why don't he go over to the Synagogue instead of hangin' around a Christian church? Mr. Gilchrist gave this feller his overcoat. I s'pose he's come back for the gloves!"

"Tell him I'll speak to Mr. Gilchrist," the clergyman responded, and the grumbling Barnaby went off, muttering his scorn for "the poor man" as he went, and shaking his head despairingly over the doings of this strange young Mr. Gilchrist. "Give such a man your overcoat, and of course he'll come for more!"

"Well. there you are," Goodkind observed. "And what I wanted to talk to you about privately is—what's got into the boy? Has he gone crazy?"

Dr. Wadham paused in serious reflection before replying. "I've asked myself that," he said at length. "I've asked myself if what he saw in France——"

"Exactly. A lot of young fellows go off the handle and start out to reform the world, but this lad has run through twenty thousand dollars in less than three months!"

Dr. Wadham was horrified. "In addition to his salary?" he asked. "Incredible!"

"Yes. I could understand if he'd spent the money on himself, but he hasn't! He's given it away! Gilchrist's father was my first partner, and I got the boy

in here, and I feel responsible for him. As trustee, I can refuse to turn over another penny of his principal, and, as senior warden, I can demand his resignation from this church. But I want him to have every chance. Tell him if he'll get a grip on himself and reconsider tomorrow's sermon——hello! Here's Benfield!"

The newcomer, whose arrival broke in upon Goodkind's declaration of independence, was a man of fifty, the type known as a "rough diamond." He was self-made, and proud of the making. Nothing of education, of refinement, of knowledge or appreciation of fine things had gone into it, to be sure, but his pride fastened upon the fortune that he had acquired by dint of the hardest toil, and glowed accordingly. He was arrogant, domineering, used to having his own way, and to sweeping obstacles aside. He had a bull-like voice; indeed, not only in his tone, but in his thick neck, heavy body, bulging eyes, clumsy, sometimes violent movements, he resembled that proverbial destroyer of the china-shop. Steered by Barnaby, he entered the study with his hat upon his head, and took up a position facing the two who had risen, his hands in his pockets and an aggressive lower lip thrusting itself forward.

"Hello, George! Howdy, Doctor!" he greeted the others briefly. "Am I late?"

Benfield's presence increased the Doctor's nervousness to a high degree, but his suave manner did not fail him. "We've been waiting for you," he said. He added anxiously, "We had better lower our voices, per-

haps, if we are going to discuss Mr. Gilchrist."

"We're not!" blustered Benfield. "We've been discussing long enough! All I've got to say now, is: Gilchrist leaves this church or I do!" There was fight in his tone, his eye, his manner; crude fight, the unvarnished battle of the street.

Goodkind put in a word of diplomacy. "Now wait a minute!" he urged.

"Isn't that a little—a little mandatory?" inquired the Doctor.

But neither produced any effect. Benfield's fierce bluster continued. "I don't know what it is, but it goes!" he shouted. "I've worked hard all my life, and now this fellow gets up and tells me what I've worked for is nothing, and that I'm nothing, and all my ideas is wrong!" He shook his head upon its bull neck like a fighting animal.

"Oh, he didn't say that!" soothed Dr. Wadham.

"Oh, yes, he did! Last Sunday, and every Sunday! I've got two million dollars tied up in Black River mines, and I'm not paying to have the socialist papers down there print that my own minister is in favor of strikes!"

Goodkind laid a quick hand on Benfield's arm. "Wait a minute, Charlie. That's not the tone to take to Dr. Wadham. We all feel that Gilchrist has gone too far, and we're agreed——"

Benfield had shaken off the conciliatory hand, and now he roared: "Does he preach tomorrow?"

"We're agreed," persisted Goodkind, disregarding

he interruption, "that if he insists on preaching about the strike——"

"He goes?" demanded Benfield.

"He goes!" replied Goodkind.

"All right. And if he don't insist?"

"He stays."

"And I go!" Benfield snatched his hat, which he had tardily removed, and prepared to go. "You can decide which of us of us is the most val'able to your church!" he declared savagely. "Because I tell you again—and straight—this church ain't 'big enough for Gilchrist and me!"

He was jamming his hat down upon his head as he bellowed his ultimatum, conscious only of his own rage and determination—he was starting toward the door—when, just upon the threshold, he found himself confronted by a smile. The young man standing there met Benfield's eye without a shifting of his own—met it fairly and fully—and still his kindly smile held, as he responded quietly:

"A church that isn't big enough for two little men, Mr. Benfield, must be somewhat crowded for God!"

As Daniel Gilchrist spoke, the older man's veins seemed about to burst. A heavy purple suffused his face. With a snort of wrath he dashed past the young clergyman, and was gone. The other stood for an instant looking after him with a touch of pity in his smiling glance; then, stepping forward, he joined the two in Dr. Wadham's study.

CHAPTER V.

Daniel Gilchrist.

The day had been a busy one for the young clergyman, Daniel Gilchrist. To him had been given the privilege and the responsibility of preaching the Christmas sermon, and he had, for many hours, been plunged in thought and ink at his desk in the little study of the Parish House.

The study was perched high at the top of the building, where pigeons alighted on the window sill and were fed by Mary Margaret. It was a bare little room with one window—but it was all that Gilchrist wanted. "Give me a table, a chair, pen and ink," he said, "and I'm armed for battle." For this young rector, with the kindliest, most good-fellowish smile in the world, was the modern man militant.

Anyone looking for a typical reformer in this man of thirty-three, one-time hero of the football eleven at a great university, would have been deeply disappointed. He showed not one of the usual qualifications. He was not narrow, or hard, or forbidding of aspect—on the other hand, he was entirely genial in glance and handclasp. The modern asceticism that he practiced was not the sort to leave him gloomy and cadaverous—no self-inflicted lashes or hair shirts for this vigorous ex-athlete. Rather, a stern regime of healthful, simple living which rendered him all the more hard and fit.

He was tall, lean, broad-framed, strong, with quick, energetic movements; his skin was clear, his gray eye vivid and frank. The stamp of the gentleman was upon him, and, with his firm, finely chiselled features, his black hair arching back from a strong forehead, he was uncommonly handsome. The goodness that shone in his face was partly good humor, and yet the clear-seeing might have caught the fire of the zealot, the flame of exaltation. But, if a zealot, he was a practical one—the sort with feet upon the earth. His charm and power lay largely in his quick and sincere sympathy—his humaneness.

Early that afternoon Mary Margaret had thump-thumped her way to his study and had found no one there. The reason that Mary Margaret thump-thumped when she walked was that she had four feet, as she said—"two of 'em was feet, an' the other two was sticks." The latter were the crutches which made it possible for her to get about in a world that showed very little interest in her getting about at all. In fact, if it hadn't been for her wonderful friend, Mr. Gilchrist, Mary Margaret thought that she would have "jus' laid down on the sidewalk an' let it happen." "It" was the end of all things.

She was a little waif from nowhere,—just one of the many from the shadows, whom he loved. This little girl of thirteen, along with a sick mother and two small brothers, had been rescued by him from starvation; the four established in a tiny flat; a living secured to them. And now she gave her days to serving him—as far as he would let her. Sometimes she could bring

him lunch when he was writing so hard that he forgot to eat. Sometimes she could dust the study and put it to rights. And today, the day before Christmas, she had struggled up those three long flights with a surprise for him.

What luck to find him out! She crept to his littered desk and there laid a tiny, grubby bag of something—something that had cost her many hoarded pennies to buy. Dilly Gilliam might have pronounced it "bum" candy, but to Mary Margaret it was the most splendid of Christmas gifts.

Thump!—thump! Softly! She was stealing out, thrilled with the excitement of the season, when, from the *portière,* the wonderful Mr. Gilchrist stepped forth. She gave a happy little jump, and on the instant felt herself snatched up into his strong arms.

"I hid!" he cried gaily. "I heard you coming! I spied! And I know what you did—you left a Christmas gift for me! There never was anybody as excited as I am—I can hardly wait to open it!"

"Oh! Are you really, truly glad?"

With a squeal of delight she threw her arms around his neck. Wasn't it all glorious? Why, there wouldn't be any Christmas without Mr. Gilchrist! She might not be alive today at all!

"And now," he said, "I've been writing so hard that my thoughts are whirling around like a buzz-saw, and I'm going out to get some fresh air. Put on your things—wrap up warm—and we'll have a walk."

A few minutes later he was outside, talking with the shivering group who huddled above the grating; and

then off, down the street with Mary Margaret. He left her, presently, at her home, and set out into the cold upon errands of his own. When he presented himself at Dr. Wadham's study, he was glowing with his walk in the sharp air—and he wore no overcoat.

Benfield having made his violent departure, Dr. Wadham met his assistant's frank gaze, and showed embarrassment.

"Mr. Benfield is a little—ah—a little—" he began nervously.

Daniel showed no embarrassment on his part. "Yes; a little," he responded quietly. He fell to chafing his cold wrists.

Goodkind observed the act. "Pneumonia weather, Daniel!" he said as he reached for his hat. "Where's your overcoat?"

"Outside," was Daniel's ambiguous reply.

"Oh, yes. There's a man out there, too, who says he won't go 'way till he sees you." Goodkind walked over to the young man and laid a hand on his arm. "Dan, you're an awfully decent fellow," he said, "but I still think you made a mistake going into the church. If you ever want to talk it over with me, I'll be glad to help you—any time! You know that! Goodbye, Doctor—goodbye, Dan, and a Merry Christmas!" With his brisk friendliness he was off, and the two clergymen faced each other alone.

They seated themselves, but the talk did not begin easily. There was a long, charged silence. Dr. Wadham broke it.

"Daniel, you're in trouble," he said.

The younger man smiled. "Doctor, I'm used to it."

But a grave face met his smile—grave and anxious. "This time it's serious," the Doctor responded. "I've warned you often. I don't see how you can have been so blind."

"I haven't been blind."

"Then you don't care for your position in this church."

Gilchrist spoke with feeling. "There's only one thing I care for more!" he exclaimed.

"And that is——?"

"To be worthy of it!"

The Doctor shook his head. "When you're as old as I am, Daniel, you'll understand that being honest does not necessarily mean being disagreeable."

"Doesn't it mean—telling the truth?"

"Do you know the truth, Daniel?"

The young man's eyes flashed back at him. Somewhere behind their cheery friendliness there was a certain hard glint, as though to show that he was capable of standing his ground.

"Yes; don't you?" he answered abruptly. He rose, and paced nervously. "Doesn't every man—in his heart? And if we want to keep it in our hearts, and never think about it or look it in the face, shouldn't someone pry open the door and cry, 'Behold'? . . . . I didn't tell them anything they didn't know, Doctor. I don't *know* anything they don't know. I just reminded them——"

While Gilchrist went on, the Doctor's feelings had been swelling to a dangerous point. They could no

longer be suppressed. He, too, rose and fell to pacing. As Daniel reached this point, they exploded in the angriest utterance that the suave clergyman had yet permitted himself:

"You just reminded them that we were heathen!" he cried indignantly.

Daniel shook his head gently. "No. That we were Christians, and every man our brother, and that we were sitting, overdressed and overfed, in a Christian church, while our brothers froze and starved outside—in a Christian world!"

"That isn't fair!" the Doctor cried. "These good people have given——"

"What cost them nothing. What they don't need. . . . . You're a good man, Doctor, and, honestly, what would you say tomorrow if your wife told you she'd sold her rings and given the money to the poor?"

The Doctor stammered a trifle. "Why, I——" he began.

"You'd say she was crazy!"

"But there's no necessity——"

"Oh, yes, there is! There'll be people lying in the parks tonight. What would Mrs. Tice say if I invited them to sleep in her pew?"

The two had continued to stand, to pace from time to time, on opposite sides of the great table. Now the Doctor brought up eye to eye with Dan, coldly staring into the face of the younger man. His hands were clinched in nervous tension.

"She would say that there's no reason why she should share dirt and disease!" he cried.

Daniel met his cold stare. "Exactly!" he responded. "We may *believe* in the brotherhood of man but we *know* about germs! We're not sure what is truth, but there's one thing we *are* sure of, and *mean* to be sure of, and that's our own comfort! You know that, and I know it, and they know it—but we mustn't say it! All right; in God's name, what are we to say?"

Daniel reached his climax with a stinging force that was like a blow—a blow struck out by no feeble arm. The stubborn determination which had been leading him to do "queer things" of late amazed the Doctor in its evident strength and definiteness of purpose. Fear seized him; was Dan indeed afflicted mentally? Were the worst fears of Mr. Goodkind to be proved correct?

"Precisely," he replied nervously. "And that brings us to tomorrow's sermon. I understand that you intend to talk about the strike. "Dan nodded. "And that's not a very pleasant subject for Christmas. Wouldn't it be more fitting to preach from the text, 'Glory to God in the Highest'?"

For the instant, Daniel's eyes turned dreamy. "'And on earth, Peace, good will toward men' . . . ." he murmured, his voice trailing off.

The Doctor seized delightedly upon the words. Now, perhaps, the boy was coming to his senses! "Yes!" he cried with enthusiasm. "You might say, 'There are many kinds of peace' — —"

Daniel's dreaminess fell from him like a cloud riven by the lightning flash. "But there *aren't!*" he cried, and, with his exclamation, his fist came down upon the table. It was the second time that afternoon that the

bronze paper-knife and paper-weight had jumped at the blow of an angry fist; and this was no less determined, no less formidable than the other.

"There is physical peace," returned Dr. Wadham. He had resumed his placating manner. "Peace that came with the end of this cruel war!"

But again the fist came down. Gilchrist's head was up now, his brows were drawn into a knotted frown, his eye glinted steel. "There *is* no peace!" he declared. "There is only fear—and hate—and vanity—and lust, and envy, and greed—of men and nations! There are only people preying on one another, and a hungry horde at the very doors of your church! . . . . My text will be," he added deliberately, " 'And Peter followed afar off'."

"I don't understand," groped Dr. Wadham, helplessly.

Into Daniel's tone, just now indignantly human, crept something mystic—something divine. Again the veil of the dreamer stole over his face. In a low voice that sounded clear in the silent room, he murmured:

"We all follow—afar off!"

Not the words, simple that they were, but the tone, far-off gaze, alarmed the worthy Doctor. A strange look, this, that had spread over the young man's face! could it really be . . . . *was* Daniel wandering? . . . . he stared at him with deep anxiety in his kind old eyes, then he stepped forward and laid fatherly hands upon both the broad young shoulders.

"Daniel!" he cried. "My dear fellow . . . . !"

Gilchrist read the doubting, searching look, and laughed shortly.

"Don't worry," he said. "I'm quite sane. Only—I've been wondering about it for a long time."

"Wondering?"

"What would happen if anybody really tried to live like Christ."

Dr. Wadham shook his head profoundly. "It can't be done," he stated, and with assured, though sad, finality.

Gilchrist looked sharply and interrogatively at the older man.

"Isn't it worth trying?" he demanded. "Men risk their lives—every day—in experiments far less worth while. We've had centuries of 'fear and hate, and greed'—and where have they brought us? Why not try love?"

"How can you make them try?"

"By showing that it would work."

A lifetime of formulated Christian service had discouraged the Doctor. Again he shook his head. "It *won't* work ,Daniel," he returned. "It's a beautiful ideal, but it won't work. Times have changed, and things are different. Life isn't as simple as it was two thousand years ago. The trouble with you Daniel, is that you're not practical."

Slowly, ponderingly the other spoke—or rather, thought out loud. "I—wonder," he said.

"And the great need of the church is practical men. We mustn't take the Scriptures too literally. We must try to interpret their spirit. And, above all, we must

please our congregations, or we shan't have any. And then what becomes of our influence? Better fall back on my text for tomorrow, Daniel."

"I can't." It was not discourteous, but it was quick, decisive. The tone in which the two short words were uttered caused the Doctor's hopes to sink.

"At least," he said firmly, "you must promise not to discuss the strike."

"I can't do that, Doctor."

"Or else let me take the pulpit!"

The young man faced him defiantly, hands on hips. This opportunity of preaching the Christmas sermon, one of the most important offices of the year, had been pledged to him many weeks ago, and he did not intend to yield up his rights. He would hold the elder clergyman to a pledge made and accepted in all good faith.

"I won't do that!" he said at length.

Through a pause in which, as in a sudden dazzling light, the two men seemed to see deep into each other's soul, their eyes met. Then, slowly, the old clergyman spoke:

"Very well!" he said deliberately. "Preach your Christmas sermon, and afterward——." He paused. After all, he loved the boy. It cost him sharp pain to go on.

"Yes?" Daniel urged.

"Afterward——I think you may find a field of greater usefulness elsewhere." There was a long silence. The challenge, the searching look in which the older and younger eyes had met, faded to sorrow—the sorrow of long friendship about to be severed. Of a

sudden Daniel turned sharply away to hide the emotion that was clutching at his throat. He took up his hat, was turning to leave——

"I'm sorry, Daniel," the Doctor put in. "I know you've been very happy in your work here. I know how failure hurts. But you saw it coming, and you wouldn't turn aside."

There was mettle in the young man's fling of the head. His emotion was under control now—he met the other eyes with a flash.

"The man," he said, "who turns away from his vision —lies!"

His lips gripped upon the utterance, his muscles were taut. His eyes were fixed on something far beyond the walls that hemmed him in. For a moment he seemed, in very truth, to be seeing the vision of which he spoke. Then, with a long-let-out breath, he came back to mundane affairs.

"It's all right, Doctor," he said with quiet friendliness, and held out his hand to the older man. "Goodbye!"

"Goodbye, Daniel. And if you'll step into the study in the morning, we'll have a look at your sermon together!"

But, as the assistant rector departed, Dr. Wadham knew well enough the sermon would be preached *as it was*—and that it would be Gilchrist's last.

CHAPTER VI.

The Test.

Slowly, young Gilchrist passed along the winding hall that led from the rector's study to the church. Doors on both sides opened upon rooms used in the Church's many activities—in one was held the Mothers' Meeting every Friday night—in another the Girls' Club—here the Boys' Union met twice a week. Into these, and a score of others, the vigorous young clergyman had thrown the spirit and energy of his indomitable youth. They were unspeakably dear to him. He knew every one of the "Mothers"—blessed, waddling old bodies who took in stairs to scrub and came to their weekly party—as if it were the social function of the season, to drink twenty-cent tea at ten-thirty in the evening, preferring it to the dollar blend which had been offered them, because, as they said, "it was more tasty." He knew every one of the "Girls"—some of them had grown gray since joining the Club in their youth—every one a wage-earner, most of them supporting a mother, or a drunken father, maybe, or a few little sisters and brothers; stretching the hard-earned dollars to make them cover the ever-increasing bills. And he was one with the boys, punching the bag, hiking off for a swim, shouldering a bat . . . .

It was over. Only one day more. One day, and he

must say goodbye to all the work into which he had thrown heart and soul . . . .

A mist blinded him, he blundered as he walked, unseeing now. Of a sudden a clear, musical voice rang in his ears:

"Well, Dan, what is it? Doesn't this world spin to your liking?"

He looked up with a flash of delight and found himself face to face with Clare Jewett standing at the choir-room door.

"You? Here?" he cried eagerly.

"Yes. I started for home some time ago, but the organist cut his finger and I came back to apply first aid."

He looked deep into her eyes. "Woman's traditional mission—to bind our wounds," he said. The mere sound of her voice, he told himself, was enough to heal any wound!

Clare turned back into the choir-room to give the last touches to her parcels there and Daniel followed her. A bare, ugly room, as choir-rooms usually are—a row of tall lockers for the robes, piles of much-thumbed and torn hymnals in black bindings with red edges, a plain table, a plainer rug, a small organ for practice—but to Daniel it suddenly became an environment of incredible beauty. For Clare was here—Clare—Clare——

"I hope I never see another doll!" she was crying. "Dolls to the right of me, dolls to the left of me, volleyed and thundered—or I felt as though they did." She looked at him more sharply. "Really, no joking—you *have* got something on your mind, Dan!"

"Not a thing—but you!"

"That subject ought not to weigh heavily. Then, if you've nothing special to do——"

"Nothing!"

"Take me home!"

He beamed. "*I'm* getting my Christmas present early!"

She drew her furs more closely. "Where's your coat?" she inquired.

"Outside. That is—I lent it to a friend. Oh, I've got another—somewhere!"

"But you can't go out without a coat!" She glanced at her wrist-watch. "Anyway, I told the taxi man not to come back till half-past four. That's the worst of not having a car. Well, we may as well sit down." They took two uncomfortable camp-chairs, not aware of discomfort, and settled down in the happy intimacy of a chat alone. From the church beyond sounded the dim tones of a recessional, as the organist practiced with his repaired finger. The hour was soft with dusk.

"What's the matter with you, Dan?" Clare asked seriously as they faced one another.

"Nothing important."

"There will be, if you insist on going around without any overcoat!" She looked at him with shrewd, narrowed, glance. "You're too generous!" she observed astutely. "How are we going to be married if you go on giving things away?"

He laughed. "Is generosity a fault in a husband?"

"That depends. Is it true you've been giving away —well—large sums of money?"

"Who told you that?"

"A little bird," she retorted. Again he laughed. "And is it true," she persisted, "that you've refused to take part of your income?"

"Little bird tell you that?"

"Yes."

"Must have been a cuckoo!"

"Is it true?" repeated Clare.

"About the money? Yes."

"Why?"

"Well, there's the strike, and a good deal of unemployment, and I've got so much. Why—*I've got you!*"

There was no response in her eyes to the warmth in his. Coldly, she rose.

"Let's not talk about it now," she said. She turned away, hesitated, looked again at her watch; then stood gazing into vacancy.

"Yes—we will talk about it, after all," she said. She faced him. "You're so changed, Dan. I hardly know you. We don't seem to want the same things any more."

He had risen with her. He stood tall above her, looking down into her upturned, anxious face.

"What do *you* want, Clare?" he asked.

"I want to be happy!"

He smiled gently into her troubled eyes, as into those of a child.

"That's exactly what I want!" he said.

"How can anybody be happy without money?" she demanded.

"How can anybody be happy *with* it? Anyway, do you think people are? Happier than the people who just have enough?"

'In our day and age there's nothing worse than poverty!" she cried, with a flash of temper. "There's nothing more degrading than having to scrimp, and save, and do without, and keep up appearances! I've tried it—ever since my father died—and I know! I can't do it any longer, and I won't!"

"Clare!" he cried in tender rebuke.

She turned away to hide the angry excitement which was making her tremble from head to foot; somewhat calmed, she faced him again.

'I don't want to quarrel with you, Dan," she said. "I just want you to be sensible. I love you, but I love the good things of life, too. I like to be warm and comfortable."

"You can be sure of that."

"But that's only the beginning. I want good clothes, and furs, and my car, and money to spend when I like. I want my own house, and my own servants, and a husband who amounts to something. I'm no different from other women of my class."

He looked at her with gentle sorrow. "I hoped you were," he said.

She pressed on, ignoring his words. "A year or two ago, people thought you were going to be a Bishop. Today you've made an enemy of every influential man in the church. All that may be very noble, but I'm not

noble, and I don't pretend to be. I don't feel any call to sacrifice myself for others, and I don't think you have any right to ask it!"

"I do ask it, Clare."

"You mean you're going on like this?" she demanded.

"I mean I can't give you expensive clothes, and servants, and a big house while all about us people are hungry."

She faced him icily. "What do you propose to give me?"

"A chance to help."

"To help wash the dishes, I suppose, in a three-room flat in a side street!"

She flung it at him between her teeth; he received it, still with that tenderness in his eyes, as though she were a beloved mistaken child and he her teacher.

"And a chance to visit the sick, and befriend the friendless," he took up her words.

"A charming prospect!" she cried bitterly.

"It really is, Clare. You don't know how happy we can be with work, and our modest plenty. There's so much to do—and they won't let me do it here. We've got to get *near* the people in trouble, and we can't with a big house and all that. I don't think we shall come to a three-room flat." He smiled. "We'll have five or six rooms, and our books, and each other."

"Oh!" She expelled her breath sharply, with a frantic gesture of her hands, as though the whole situation were intolerable. "I can't believe you're serious!" she cried. "You've always been a dreamer, but I can't be-

lieve you're going through with this fantastic nonsense!"

"I've chosen a narrow path, dear," he answered her gravely, "but I hoped it might be wide enough for us both!"

His love for her—all the longing passion of an ardent man—was welling up within him, threatening to burst bonds. He ached to gather her in his arms, to press her lips. But something told him that the hour was crucial; that the bond between them was undergoing its trial by fire, and that trial, no matter what agony it cost, must be endured to its end. This was no time to give way to passion; the easy path would have been to ignore their differences of opinion, to give way to love and love alone. But something more vital than passion must hold them together—or else, better that they fall apart!

"It isn't wide enough for us both!" she cried in reply to him, and her bitterness was now intense. "With your means and opportunities, you're offering me what any bank clerk would give his wife. I thought you loved me, but you're utterly selfish, and I think a little mad. You've a right to throw away your own life, but you've no right to throw away mine." Her right hand went to the diamond ring that he had placed upon her left; it hesitated; then, with a sudden fury, she snatched the ring and held it forth to him.

"Our engagement is ended!" she cried.

Half blinded by the suddenness of it all, he took the ring mechanically, almost dropping it in his numb misery. There was a long silence. She started toward

the door—halted—looked again at her watch—stood still in the doorway——

She, too was miserable. She was as much shocked by the suddenness of her act as was he. And now a chaos of doubts, questions, agonies, was tumbling about in her mind—what had she done? Had she, too, been mad? Would he call her back? . . . . But what else could she have done? Wasn't he altogether insane?

Confused by the chaos of thoughts, she hesitated, expecting that he would call her. But there was only that dead silence.

She turned back. "Don't you think—that you're making—a terrible mistake?" she murmured weakly.

His eyes were fixed stupidly, unknowingly, upon the ring in his hand. He looked up and met her unhappy eyes.

"No," he said with grave gentleness.

And at that she turned and went.

Daniel's eyes again fell upon the ring. Dull with pain, he stood looking at it . . . .

"Excuse me, Mr. Gilchrist—but the choir boys are coming for rehearsal——"

It was Mr. Hinkle, entering the room, with the youngsters in his wake, humming snatches of the Christmas hymns—they wanted the room for their practice hour—Gilchrist sought to rouse himself——

"Certainly—yes, of course—" he murmured, preoccupied, and he passed out. The romping pack with "Hush!" and "None of that!" pursuing them from Mr. Hinkle, shoved into the room, giggling, scuffling, whis-

pering jokes, irrepressibly bubbling over with youth and fun. The silent, melancholy figure slipped past them. With bowed head, stumbling, Daniel made his way into the church.

The ring was still in his hand, but he was no longer conscious of it. All that he knew was a penetrating misery—a dull ache that stole through him like the child of death. He raised his head—looked at the altar—soon to pass from him forever. His days in the Church of the Nativity were numbered. In the dim light he gazed at that altar on which he had sacrificed—that cross on which he, even he, had been crucified.

The church in which he had worked, which he had loved, was his for only a few hours more. And the woman of his heart . . . .

That love had been put to the test and found—wanting.

CHAPTER VII.

A Poor Man.

Clare swept out through the passage, to the street; and hurried into the waiting taxicab. She was deathly white and her eyes flamed with a mingling of rage and terror. Rage at Daniel, for his obstinacy, his cruelty, as she deemed it. Terror at the thing she had done. She had burned her bridges; what lay ahead?

Staring straight before her with wide, brilliant eyes, she did not see old Barnaby, bent over the troublesome electric light fuse. He rose as she passed, stepped forward to open the door for her, bade her a formal "Goodnight, Miss." She made no reply, was unaware of his presence, even; with sadly shaking head Barnaby turned back to his work.

"An' she's always so pleasant-spoken," he muttered anxiously. "I can't think what it is. Something terrible musta happened to her to make her look like that."

But the troublesome fuse again absorbed Barnaby. Whatever was the matter with the thing? he grunted as he labored with it. It'd got to be made to work, or that Star of Bethlehem would be plumb dark! He plunged once more into the task, tweaking here, screwing there, trying out various connections, until queer flickers and flashes of light, and still queerer shadows,

filled the church, as broken, flickering notes fill a room at the tuning of an instrument.

So preoccupied was Barnaby now that he no more saw an entering figure than had Clare seen his own a few minutes before. Through the outer door of the church this shabby figure came, from the icy world without, pale and pinched by the gale. He slipped in without a sound, passed Barnaby as he bent above the fuse, passed up the aisle . . . .

By now the church was quite dark, except for the flickers caused by Barnaby's experiments. As Daniel entered it, he was conscious of the restfulness of the dark and the quiet. It seemed to open like arms to receive his troubled spirit; he went forward into it . . . .

He paused, facing the altar. Suddenly the organ music burst forth; Christmas music. He listened:

> Hark, the herald angels sing,
> Glory to the new-born King!
> Peace on earth and mercy mild,
> God and sinners reconciled.

Old and familiar as the music was, it thrilled him again as it had always thrilled him with its message. He stood listening, drinking it in; then, as it died away, with slow and reverent step he advanced up the aisle, toward the altar. He believed himself alone; but now, as he advanced, it seemed to Dan that he heard a step behind him. The church was quite black, Barnaby's efforts having ceased for the time; and the young clergyman could not make out the figure of the poor man who, pinched and cold, was coming behind him up the aisle.

"Who's there?" Daniel asked, peering vainly into the dark. "Are you looking for someone?"

"Yes," replied the ragged, half-frozen man.

Dan could barely make out the fact that a form was there; he spoke to the voice:

"I'm the assistant rector, Mr. Gilchrist." His tone was full of friendly warmth. No stranger ever failed to find a welcome from Daniel.

"Yes," the poor man responded in a matter-of-course tone. "I know you, Mr. Gilchrist."

Daniel's eyes, growing accustlomed to the darkness, made out the form rather better; and he recognized the voice. "Oh, yes!" he exclaimed. "You're the man who was cold. Can I do anything for you?"

"I think you can."

"Let's have it, then," the clergyman said heartily. Having done one good deed never prevented him from doing another the same day.

But the man did not reply directly to this. "Perhaps I can help you, too," was his enigmatical response.

"In what way?"

"In my way."

"My poor man, I wish you could!" It burst from Daniel; suddenly a wave of misery flooded over him, a black, drowning despair. The work of his heart, the woman of his heart, were both being snatched from him; shock had followed upon shock, and for the instant he felt himself submerged by a grief too great for him ever to rise above it.

"I was so sure of what I wanted to do!" he cried to the almost invisible figure. His despair impelled him

to confide in anyone who happened to be near. "And now I begin to wonder if it can be done!"

"It has been done," quietly, surely said the man. There was something mysterious in the way he seemed to know all about things that Daniel had not told him of—to know, and to feel a conviction.

"But in this day——" cried Daniel, "in this practical world—can any man follow the Master?"

"Why not?" quietly replied the poor man. "Is this day different from any other? Was the world never practical before? Is this the first time of conflict between flesh and spirit? If it could be done then, why not now, and if it was ever worth the doing, why not now?"

"But how?" Daniel demanded. The man's quiet conviction seemed to hold out a hand to him; unaccountable that he should so confide in a poor fellow who, practically a stranger, had wandered into the church to get warm!

The man replied: "We have been told how."

"Yes," murmured Daniel thoughtfully; and he quoted aloud: " 'Take no thought of the morrow . . . Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor . . . . Love thy neighbor as thyself . . . . Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you.' But if a man did those things today, people would think him mad!"

"What does it matter?"

"He would lose everything!"

"And gain everything!"

"What good can one man do?" cried the despairing Gilchrist.

"Why don't you try?" came the response. Strangely, Daniel seemed now in the position of humble pupil, sitting at the feet of some greater, wiser counsellor. The voice in the dark was so sure, so strong, so ineffably benignant; the gentle words were so wise! Some unfathomable mystery hung, like the darkness of the church, over him—enveloped him . . . .

"He tried, and they crucified Him!" he cried to the voice, and his cry was an appeal from the depths of a great misery.

"Did they?" came the gentle voice. "And if they did, what does that matter?" Almost, the poor man hidden there in the shadows seemed to be some great teacher comforting and advising a grieving, perplexed child. "Is a man dead whose ideal lives?" he went on. "Ye crucified me, but I am with ye alway, even unto the end of the world!"

At the words Daniel Gilchrist started forward, plunging into the darkness, towards the man. "In God's name, who are you?" he demanded, striving to pierce the veil that blinded him. But now the shivering figure was no longer there; the voice that answered him came from farther off, in the direction of the altar; Daniel swung about.

"I am a Jew!" was the answer.

As he spoke, slowly the tree and everything beneath it was illuminated by the Star of Bethlehem. The light, dim at first, grew stronger and stronger, its rays revealing the sanctuary, and picking out the points of

the cross upon the altar. But where the poor man stood was nothing. No one was there. But, where the light gathered into a vivid spot, there, above the altar——

There was a face! It glowed, vivid as life, in that flash of intense light. A sorrowing, loving, beautiful face. It was pallid, and the hair fell about it in an odd way that somehow suggested a crown of thorns. With a cry, Daniel flung himself forward, falling upon his knees, his hands clasped, his face uplifted toward that face about the altar . . . .

Of a sudden the music, which had been faintly heard from the choir-room, burst forth in superb chorus. It was as though a heavenly choir were chanting the Christmas anthem:

> Glory to the new-born King!
> Hark, the herald angels sing,

Out at the fuse box, old Barnaby was slamming up the switch. Too late to work any longer! He turned away in disgust, snapping off the Star of Bethlehem. Blackness once more filled the church. The anthem died away, like the light. The face above the altar was gone, the poor man was gone. Daniel Gilchrist knelt before the altar—alone, in the silence, in the dark.

CHAPTER VIII.

Christmas Morning.

Christmas morning found the Church of the Nativity well filled with its prosperous parishioners. They thronged up the aisles in a handsomely dressed procession, some being shown to seats by obsequious ushers, others going directly and with authority to their own firmly-paid-for pews. The rustling of silks, the whiff of perfumes, the mingling of colors, all added to the picture of physical beauty that the church itself presented, with its brilliant stained glass, and its decorations of flowers and green wreaths.

High above the seats of the mighty was the gallery. Here gathered some other parishioners—or, if not actually that, they were persons frequent in their attendance. They were members of what Jerry Goodkind would have named casually as "the great unwashed." From the East Side most of the recruits came; and it was Daniel Gilchrist who had brought them. It was to hear him preach that they were present today.

Perhaps, if the truth were known, it was to hear him preach that many of the others, too,—those occupying their own pews below—were present. For it had been noised abroad that Gilchrist had "threatened" to preach a sensational sermon on this Christmas morning, and, as Dilly Gilliam had put it, church-going must

"How can anybody be happy without money?" she demanded.

be made attractive. The hint of anything sensational was likely to draw some of those who had counted on giving the entire day to other amusements.

All of the busy group who, the day before, had dressed the tree, were present in full force, with their families and friends. In a front seat sat George Goodkind, briskly business-like in his attendance upon church, just as he was at his own office desk. There was an air of satisfied efficiency, of pursing his lips over a job well performed, about George Goodkind—whether he were singing the "Amen" at the end of a hymn, or clipping the coupon from a fat bond. Beside him sat his dashing bachelor son, Jerry; his perpetual smile played about his lips, in church as everywhere.

From time to time it flickered back over his shoulder, past Benfield, who sat in the pew directly back of theirs, on to where Clare sat alone. She was very pale, very grave this joyous Christmas morning. The tingle of the dazzling winter sunshine had not touched her, it seemed. She looked withdrawn and cold. She returned Jerry's attempts at flirtation with only a wan smile and a faint nod. A strain, a painful tension was visible in the lines which drew her face; the strain of someone waiting for calamity.

Mrs. Thornbury, across the aisle, fell heir to Jerry's flirtatious glances, Clare having done with them. Not that Leila was the sort to accept that which was discarded by another; but she had her reasons. She knew very well "the lay of the land," and she knew that her understanding of—and with—Jerry Goodkind was in no way endangered by Clare Jewett. To her, Clare

was dull, prudish, and anything but dangerous. She admitted no rivalry in that quarter. And the glance that Leila sent back, across the aisle, to Jerry Goodkind, was one of deep significance.

Mr. and Mrs. Gilliam, with their daughter Dilly properly in tow, presented themselves with prayer- and hymn-books in hand, as likewise Mrs. Tice. There was much rustling of books, more rustling of wraps laid off and gowns adjusted, and then, promptly at eleven, the organ burst forth. With a splendid chorus of boy voices the processional began; and Daniel Gilchrist, surpliced and robed as officiating priest, said a silent prayer. God alone could help him through the self-imposed ordeal that lay ahead!

> It came upon the midnight clear,
> That glorious song of old,
> From angels bending near the earth,
> To touch their harps of gold.

One after another the splendid old hymns pealed forth. The splendid old service resounded: "The Lord is in His holy temple" . . . . "Dearly beloved brethren, the Scripture moveth us in sundry places" . . . . "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth" . . . .

Dr. Wadham's deep, sonorous voice reading the prayers, the lessons . . . . The responses of the congregation, full, reverent . . . . Prayer-books rustling, hymn-books shared by neighboring thumbs . . . .

It was time for the sermon. The congregation settled back against the solid oak pews, all attention. A

tall, broad-shouldered, lean young man was coming forward to the pulpit. Dr. Wadham was retiring to his seat in the chancel. The excessive nervousness which caused the Doctor's hands to clasp each other to the point of pain was not seen by anyone in the body of the church. But Daniel Gilchrist had seen it; he had caught, too, the tremor in the older man's voice as he read the lessons for the day. And, in spite of his preoccupation, a wave of pity passed over him. He loved the Doctor, and he was sorry that he had to hurt him!

"'And Peter followed afar off'." Daniel read his text slowly, and repeated it. He charged it, somehow, with a meaning that did not appear upon the surface. The intensity of feeling that burned behind his quiet exterior that morning already held the parishioners to the closest attention.

For awhile they listened as to any conventional Christmas sermon. Peter in the footsteps of the Master—following; the meaning of those footsteps; the difficulty of following in them. Inoffensive generalities. Quite the thing for this season of generous giving, of loving service. Dr. Wadham's tension relaxed, Jerry and Dilly smothered yawns. Perhaps there was to be no sensation after all!

Attention was wandering a bit—when all at once—what was that the young rector was saying? He had leaned forward with a sudden movement, over the pulpit, as though he were about to descend into the midst of his hearers; he seemed to be hurling his words at

them, at those in the front pews, as though they were missiles:

"Following? What does it mean?" he cried. "Saying a few prayers while peeping at a neighbor's new hat? Singing a few hymns with one's thoughts on the ticker? We profess ourselves followers of Christ, but, like Peter, we all 'follow afar off.' Without the least impulse to brotherhood, with no thought except for our own comfort and prosperity, despising the Jew, we kneel in worship of that Teacher whose fundamental was brotherly love, who chose poverty, and was himself a Jew. We have just finished a long and cruel war—we followers of the Prince of Peace! Today only the sculptured stone walls of His temple separate us from the cold and hungry and forgotten while we pray to Him! *Followers! Christians!*" With biting scorn he flung the two ironic words like acid. "There is not a barbarian in any savage land who could be more indifferent to the suffering about him; chanting thanks to the Lord who gave His life for us, and, in whose name, we will give nothing that leaves us really poorer—nothing that involves a single hour of honest sacrifice!"

A protesting murmur seemed to rise from the congregation as from one indignant throat. A stout lady and gentleman exchanged indignant glances, then rose, as if on the verge of angry departure. Mrs. Gilliam leaned over and nudged Mrs. Tice. Dr. Wadham, in his chancel seat, turned ashy.

"We say we have given," Gilchrist went on. He, too, was pale, but his voice rang like a battle cry. "How have we done it? We are the richest and most fash-

ionable congregation in New York. Today we sit in our silks and furs in New York's finest church, velvet and carved wood within, waiting limousines without, enjoying righteousness because of the useless toys with which we have decked the symbol of His birth. Yesterday we sat in comfortable offices plotting to get the better of our fellow man, to starve him that we may have plenty, to freeze him that we may be warm, to enslave him that we may be free to gratify our idle desires——"

There was a movement on the part of Benfield—a giant heaving like that of a bull about to charge; his heavy brows drew to a black line as he followed the young speaker's burning words:

"*Christians!* I say unto you that to the most of us Jesus is only a name, a word without effect, a label we wear upon our coats! In the Church of the Nativity we celebrate the birth of a Savior who, in the hearts of most of us, has never yet been born! If there were one among us who really followed, ye would jeer at him, despise him, reject him, crucify him, as ye despised, rejected, and crucified your Lord!"

High in the gallery a rough-looking man leaned forward, eagerly listening. He nudged his wife, who also leaned forward. There was a look on their faces as of long hunger being appeased.

"If you would really follow," the speaker went on, "if you would make your religion something more than empty words and worn-out forms—I can tell you the way . . . . as He told you. Cease chanting and do! Cease hymning and help! Cease praising and obey!

For you who do not deceive me, or one another, cannot hope to deceive Him. You—the women before me who spend on gew-gaws what would keep whole families from hunger——"

Mrs. Tice smothered a cry. Mrs. Gilliam started up, turned to leave, but Dilly, with a jerk at her sables, pulled her down again.

"What satisfaction can you find in such adornments?" went on the speaker. "Can your vanity's delight bring you real ease of heart?"

Dilly had been surreptitiously powdering her nose with the dainty puff from her new gold vanity-case. At Gilchrist's last phrase she started violently and slipped the case and the puff out of sight.

And now Gilchrist's hand, reaching toward the front pews, all at once became a long finger, pointing. It pointed mercilessly at the men who sat there; it seemed a weapon aimed directly at them, about to be discharged. In his white face his eyes burned terribly, burned their way straight into the souls of the men before him; his voice had risen until it seemed a trumpet, warning, summoning his hearers to confront the charge.

"And you—the men," he went on, "who pray to a God you think incapable of seeing the starved little children who work weary hours in your mines and mills that you may deck the mothers of *your* children in purple and fine linen! Even I see you, for you are here, in His Temple, within reach of my voice, almost within touch—"

It was at Goodkind, at his son Jerry, at Benfield that

the long accusing finger pointed. Goodkind started sharply and leaned forward, facing the young speaker directly. Benfield, in the pew behind, leaned forward too, and together they met the attack.

"—And, as I speak, the face of each of you proclaims him convicted—"

"You lie!"

It rang through the building, furious, resounding. Benfield had jumped to his feet, and now, his bulky shoulders squared as though for physical fight, he shouted his charge aloud.

People were aghast. Many sprang to their feet as if to leave, then stared about them in foolish fashion, waiting to see what others were going to do. Gilliam, silent and self-contained, held his seat and watched. There was a crowding forward into the aisles; women in the rear craned their necks to see what the great Benfield and Goodkind were going to do, while men blocked their view.

Goodkind leaned toward his friend and laid a hand upon his arm. "Look here, Charlie," he said in a low tone, "have you forgotten that this is a church of God?"

But Benfield threw him off with a wrathful movement. His face was purple with rage, great swollen veins showed threateningly at his temples.

"I don't care what it is!" he cried. "He's preaching anarchy!"

A sudden confusion blocked the aisle—there was a struggle. Out of it emerged the rough-looking man who had left his wife and hurried down from the gallery. He had rushed straight at Benfield with a fist

like a knot of oak, an oath on his lips. The congregation has forgotten the preacher, his words which had been hurled like a match into the midst of dynamite; their attention was focussed upon the excited man and his attack upon the distinguished parishioner, Benfield.

All but Clare's. She sat, white and with eyes closed, rigidly in her pew. She waited for the outcome—but she could not watch. The situation was unbearable. This horrifying scene—an open fight, in the church to which she belonged, and caused by the man who had, until yesterday, been her affianced . . . . A faintness passed over her, she felt herself sinking back against the pew . . . .

Dilly had jumped to the seat, was standing there to obtain a full view, her inquisitive little nose fairly sniffing the thrill of the chaos. The ushers had darted forward, trying to get at the rough-looking man. They succeeded, before his threatened blow descended; but they were not able to check his shouts:

"It's the truth!" the man cried in a voice that rang harsh through the aisles. "Go on Dan, tell 'em!"

With a forceful jerk the largest usher dragged the man off, and he muttered away to surly silence. Goodkind pulled Benfield back to his seat at last. Clare, rallying, opened her eyes with an effort at self-mastery and looked Gilchrist full in the face where he stood silent and waiting in the pulpit. And now, as Dr. Wadham came forward to the steps of the chancel, lifting his hand commandingly for silence, she saw a strange sight. Deliberately, with pallid, drawn face but the fire of determination never flinching, Gilchrist removed

his surplice, his stole and other orders, and stepped forth clad in the long, black, asceticism of his cassock unadorned. An austere figure, like that of some monk of old; the exaltation of martyrdom lighting his face, as though a fire glowed within, an unquenchable fire; as he slowly uttered his last charge:

"The majority of you," he said, "are parasites—cowards—afraid to face the truth."

Something in his face had compelled silence, far more than Dr. Wadham's uplifted hand of command. Spellbound under the lash of the young man's words, the people sat still now. They watched him as, during an impressive moment, he waited for his words to sink in. Then he picked up the discarded orders and laid them on the edge of the pulpit where all could see.

"So," he said, and his voice was quiet now, though no less determined. "I have finished here—for good."

He leaned forward. "I shall go out into the free world," he went on, "and preach the word of God—His truth for my altar and His sky for my roof."

It was his last utterance in the Church of the Nativity. He turned slowly, walked down from the pulpit, to the chancel steps. The congregation stared, dumb and motionless. The choir boys nudged one another and stretched their necks for a last glimpse of him as he went. Dr. Wadham, still standing, his hand uplifted where it had been all this time, gave him a look of horror as he passed.

Daniel Gilchrist walked down the steps, and out of the church.

. . . . . .

Mr. Hinkle, playing as loudly as possible, strove, a little later, to drown the whispers and excited gossip of the departing congregation. They buzzed, gabbled, "Oh-ed!" and "Ah-ed!" their way down the aisles. Silent among them walked Clare Jewett.

As she reached the vestibule, she paused. She still felt stunned by all that had happened. Although she had broken with Daniel, outwardly, her emotions were filled with him even now. The bond had been too strong for her not to feel shaken to the very foundation by its rupture and by this event. But she was indignant, as well; what right had he thus to abuse his privilege in the pulpit, to preach anarchy, to offend upright citizens? . . . .

"Hello, Clare!"

It was casual, it was *insouciant*, it was Jerry. She looked up to see him smiling lightly, impertinently down upon her.

"Hello," he repeated.

Only a few hours before—had she really said it? Had she really sworn never to speak to him again? Dimly this thought occurred to her; but it was very dim. She was confused, stricken, outraged, lonely, afraid of the future . . . . Wanly at first, then in more open friendliness, she smiled back.

"What's the matter with letting me drive you home?" Jerry continued. Apparently he bore her no ill will; indeed, he seemed totally unconscious of her infuriated vow of the afternoon before.

"Car's just outside."

Her eyes closed for a moment, as if in total weari-

ness of the spirit; then they opened, dark and beautiful, and she went toward him.

"Thank you, Jerry," she said. "So good of you."

CHAPTER IX.

At Black River.

The year that followed, like some eccentric chess player, reached forth upon the board of human affairs and made many swift and surprising moves in the little group that had centered about the Church of the Nativity. Or perhaps they were not surprising, to one who had the perception to watch cause and effect and their workings in the human game. But sudden they were, and changeful, with quick shiftings that often gave rise to much gabble and gossip.

For one thing, Jerry Goodkind passed from the list of eligibles. Fond mammas heaved a final sigh of sorrow and gave up the pursuit. It was in the spring of 1919 that he led an Easter bride down from the altar, under a bower of white roses and the blessing of Dr. Wadham. The church was packed to the doors with New York's fashion and wealth; the air was heavy with the breath of festooned flowers; gleaming ribbons made barriers against intrusion; bridesmaids and flower girls in yellow fluttered like golden butterflies. The bride was exquisitely lovely, her lustrous bronze hair shining beneath her mother's veil of precious old lace, her slender figure willowy in clinging satin. Probably no more deeply envied bride had passed up and down that aisle in many a season.

"Hasn't she just got *everything?*" a girl was heard

to whisper. "The richest husband—and that gorgeous house—and she's a beauty, and a fascinator, and clever, and—oh, say, she's simply grabbed it *all!*"

This was, indeed, the popular opinion. And yet, strangely, there was something in the bride's face . . .

"Doesn't she look queer? Sort of white—almost frightened!" one of her bridesmaids whispered, as she turned to toss her bouquet among them.

Several people caught that strange and mystifying look—but they forgot it. The wicked weekly which reported the doings of the fashionable set soon announced:

> The ever popular Jerry Goodkind with his beautiful young wife, formerly Clare Jewett, have returned from their honeymoon.

And then the gayeties commenced. Dinners, dances, teas, luncheons, theater parties, house parties, in town and out, during the months that followed. The young Goodkinds entertained and were entertained. Life was a whirl of the gayety and lavish expenditure for which Clare had longed and for which she had given up Daniel Gilchrist.

George Goodkind was hardly less delighted with the change in home affairs than was his son. The house had been a masculine establishment too long, during Goodkind's years of widowerhood. "Takes a woman to make a house into a home," he said, watching Clare's deft touches, delighting in the new decorations which she had introduced, in the improvement of service, in

the greater charm of the dinner table. He beamed fondly upon her.

"Jerry and I made a good job of it when we married you!" he often observed with a happy chuckle.

So George Goodkind, quite as much as his son, found home life entirely reconstructed. But the year brought more than this of change to him. As president of the Board of Directors of the Black River mine, he found that the vast current of economic conditions showed stronger signs of shifting its channel than ever before. The difficulties between labor and capital were growing more tense; the long-threatened walk-out took place; and by the fall of 1919 he found himself trying in vain to extricate the company from one of the most far-reaching and alarming strikes which had ever been known. He knew how to handle big affairs when they ran along in their old-fashioned steady manner; but this modern unrest was bringing about situations which demanded all his powers of generalship to cope with.

He was always a man of independence and initiative; and it was in November of that year that he made a move astonishing to the other directors of the mines. He chose a man to go down to Black River and undertake the settling of the strike—a man so strangely unfitted for the task, some said, that Goodkind must have been insane to think of it. But Goodkind was not insane. He was a keen reader of human nature, and he had seen this man handle others. He knew him to have the instincts of leadership; he had seen that his

influence among the laboring class was uncommon; and he believed that he might effect a peaceful reconciliation where nobody else could. So he sent Daniel Gilchrist.

Since leaving the church, Gilchrist had worked in the slums of New York, giving away more money, much to his old friends' disgust, and helping wherever he could find a chance. He had organized some clubs, one where boys might find clean, interesting reading; another where older men, often rowdies and drunkards, foregathered for a smoke and a talk. He had plans for a larger, more unified work; but as yet he was feeling his way.

Goodkind, although once indignant at him for his "foolishness," had never lost his affection for this son of his old friend. He loved "the boy;" he admitted that Daniel's qualities were utterly lovable, even though they were sometimes enough to drive a sane, practical man mad. But he saw him from time to time; and, as the months went on, he forgot his anger and drew more closely to the young man. Daniel certainly had a rare influence over other men, especially those of the laboring class; they seemed to follow instinctively, wherever he chose to lead.

The fellow had queer theories about labor—but Goodkind had happened to know of an instance where they had been put to good use. Gilchrist had settled a difficult situation at a certain power plant, so that the men had shorter hours and higher wages, and at the same time the profit had been materially increased—in which good fortune Goodkind himself had shared. He

was immensely interested in watching the thing work out. So, when the Black River strike baffled him, he sent for his young friend.

"Daniel, you're a born leader among these people," he said. "Now turn your gift to practical use for us. Go down to our mines and get acquainted with the strikers—talk to them, use your common sense and influence to bring them to their senses. See what you, with your new theories, can do to effect a decent compromise."

Daniel jumped up and seized Goodkind's hand. "Mr. Goodkind, thanks for the chance!" he cried with his impulsive ardor. "I'd like nothing better than to work this out sanely and squarely. I think something might be done to make labor and capital better friends—to put them on a basis of better understanding. If I can do it in this case, it may be easier for everybody else in the future!"

They were both fired with what they fancied to be their harmony in the matter. They locked hands on it. The upshot was that November found Daniel Gilchrist busy down at the Black River coal mines in West Virginia.

A sky smeared by smokestacks and chimneys, by the giant outstretched arms of monster machinery—like long, ruthless black marks drawn by a destructive boy upon a smooth, clean page—that was Black River. The thick air of a mining region choked the nostrils, soot gathered upon everything. Green trees became dingy, landscapes looked as though they needed a feather-

duster. There was a lack-luster everywhere. The river flower dull, the horizon was darkly indistinct. Human beings in throngs looked smeared by the same black hand of defacement.

Daniel Gilchrist had been here over a fortnight now, and he knew the place from end to end, knew innumerable men, women and children who made up the population. "How are you today? Baby better of her croup?" he would cry to a passing woman; "You're looking mighty fit today!" he would say to a man who brightened at the observation, knowing that Gilchrist would never tell how he had found him drunk and had sobered him so quickly that he hadn't lost prestige with his wife—all the time binding him to stay sober by way of saying "Thank you." He had a way of entering into their lives, of getting under the skin.

On a bright Indian Summer morning, when the soft haze of autumn veiled a sun-flooded sky, and when the shutting-down of the mines had greatly cleansed the atmosphere of smudge, Daniel walked happily along the main street of the town. He was busily thinking; at last, he believed, he was about to arrange the settlement as he had hoped. He had almost succeeded in getting a paper drawn up—if only some of these opposing influences didn't upset his plans . . . . But hope has high in him. He looked around upon the little dingy homes, the unhappily idle people, and he believed that at last he saw the way through. Only a day or two more, and he would be able to bring this long stretch of misery to a happy ending.

"Good morning, Joe!" he called cheerfully to one of

the miners—Joe Hennig, an ugly-tempered man who never showed him the friendliness that the others did. He didn't know why Joe hated him. He wondered. "How's your wife today—her cold better?" he went on, insistently friendly.

Joe Hennig eyed him in sulky resentment.

"Never you mind how my wife's cold is. You mind your business," he retorted, and skulked off.

Daniel walked on, perplexed over this problem. He had been interested in this couple. The young wife, Pearl, was wonderfully pretty, and her adoring and madly jealous husband lavished upon her all the money he could rake and scrape together. She was too pretty, indeed, far too attractive to other men; Daniel saw danger ahead. And, having found that the woman was at bottom good-hearted, he had often gone to their little house, hoping to interest her in her home and in reading, rather than the gay clothes and the gay evenings which she now sought. Joe he had assisted, too, materially.

Down the street he caught sight of a familiar figure. It was that of Jerry Goodkind. George Goodkind had recently sent his son down to Black River, to see what he could do to help Gilchrist settle the strike. The elder Goodkind had thought that these two, so different in their viewpoints, might work together effectively. But there had been no desire to co-operate on Jerry's part.

He glanced around as Daniel approached, and nodded curtly.

"Good morning!" Daniel said. "Wasn't that Pearl

Hennig you were talking to a minute ago? How is she—her cold better?"

Jerry looked at him with insolent rage. "How do I know the names of these damn people? I asked a woman the way to Black Hill—how do I know whether she had a cold or not?"

"Oh!" Daniel said in surprise. "I thought you knew Pearl." He did not add that he had seen Jerry several times in conversation with Joe's pretty wife, and had, in fact, noticed him coming from the Hennig home the night before. They stood chatting concerning the strike, and were soon joined by Max Stedtman.

Stedtman was a wirey little man, with the face of a ferret. He twitched and jerked and wiggled and made queer darts, but his nervousness did not indicate lack of self-confidence. It was merely the outward and visible sign of an inward alert watchfulness and furtiveness. His quick eyes shifted here, there, everywhere; he saw everything, made a mental note of what he saw. He was the type of man to affect an unobtrusiveness behind which lay power. He was forty, and faintly Semitic.

"Well—what's new?" he inquired as he joined the others. "Going to settle things pretty quick?"

"If we do, we'll settle 'em *our way!*" Jerry responded with a shrug in Gilchrist's direction. He and Stedtman, however, exchanged a glance that seemed to cover some sort of understanding.

"I believe we can settle them *everybody's* way!" Daniel said with high enthusiasm.

Jerry shrugged again. Daniel turned away to speak to a group of Poles whom he knew.

"Things worse than usual, Umanski?" Daniel said to one of the Poles. He knew the situation in this man's household—poverty, sickness, at their worst. The tragedies that this long-drawn-out strike had wrought tore him as he went among these people, heard their terrible stories. Starvation, sickness without money to hire a doctor, want of every kind.

"Mr. Gilchrist, if all the rich mans was like you!" the Pole said. This Umanski—strange, somber giant—a personality in a thousand . . . . Ah, thought Daniel, it was from such as he that the New World would be wrought!

That evening Joe Hennig got drunk. It helped to drown his sorrows about the strike. Since he wasn't working, he had to be doing *something*, and getting drunk offered itself as a congenial occupation. He didn't come home to supper, and when he did arrive, at eight-thirty, he met Gilchrist leaving.

"What're you doin' my house?" he demanded drunkenly. "Didn't I warn you to keep 'way?"

"Why, Joe, I've been paying a little call on your wife, to see how her cold is, and to bring her some books. I was sorry not to find you, too."

With an oath Joe lurched into the house. Pearl, hearing him coming, swiftly hid away a scrap of paper which a small boy had brought a short time before. She had read it secretly while Daniel was there, telling her about a new book on home-making. She had be-

come tremulous with excitement while reading this scribble in Jerry Goodkind's disguised writing, but Daniel had not noticed the tremulousness, so absorbed was he in winning Pearl to the book.

The scribble read:

> Send me word what train you leave on for New York. Will meet you. I'll show you a thing or two in little old New York, my pretty Pearl! Maybe you're a whole string of pearls—how's that for a compliment?

The communication was unsigned. Pearl had read it over and over after Daniel left, and now, at Joe's entrance, she shook with nervous excitement as she hid it in her blouse.

"Say, what's that nut Gilchrist doin' here again?" Joe demanded in drunken jealousy.

Mr. Gilchrist—the man who had shown her the finest, purest friendship that Pearl Hennig had ever known! The one man in all her experience who had looked upon her merely as a human being and a friend, never once as a woman to be desired, because of her sex! He had appealed to something in her higher, finer, cleaner than she had guessed was there! It was her first impulse to defy Joe, to defend Gilchrist and assert the clean straightforwardness of his friendship—

But Pearl had other matters on foot. Jerry's sudden infatuation for her had completely turned her pretty, foolish little head. And now, if she didn't "flare up" in defense of Gilchrist, Joe would be less likely to look for trouble. He would "quiet down." And she

must get him "quieted down," if she was to carry out her plan—and Jerry's.

"Oh," she said, "I reckon he wanted to talk to you. He brought some books to us. It's a good thing, I guess—readin'. Maybe it'd learn us sumpthin' if we'd read more."

Joe emitted a growl.

"We might read some books together, you'n me."

Again a growl—more surly than before, more sinister. Pearl tried another tack. "Come on, anyway, an' get your supper!" she coaxed. She crossed to him, patted his shoulder. "You're the boy for me!" she told him. At last the thunder-cloud upon his face broke.

Craftily she waited—until the food and the hot coffee were relaxing his temper. Then, taking a seat close to him and stroking his big knee, she began:

"Say, Joe. I gotta go away for a little while. My sister in Pittsburg wants me. She's sick."

There was opposition, protest, profanity, sulking—in the end, yielding. Pearl had pictured it all beforehand. She knew the primitive, shifting moods. the way to play upon them, the upshot.

"I don't dare to wait," she wound up by saying. "I better take the mornin' train. She might we worse'n she let me know."

He assented, and soon fell into a drunken sleep. And now, packing her bag, Pearl gave way to a daze of glamorous anticipation. The train . . . then . . . New York . . . Theaters, cafés, gorgeous hotels, cabarets, marvellous gowns, jewels, women that looked like the stars of the most splendid movies, crowds of lavish

spenders, all the glittering, dazzling, thronging, bejewelled, colorful, magic panorama of which she had dreamed! All night she lay awake, picturing it. With the first daylight she was up.

> Goodbye, Joe deer. Back as soon as my sistur can spaer me.
>
> PEARL.

She scribbled it on a bit of paper, left it for her husband's first awaking glance, then—hurrying, darting, tip-toeing lest he should awaken and detain her—she took up her bag and stole away.

CHAPTER X.

The Ferret.

A delightful dinner-dance was being given at the Goodkinds' home in the East Sixties—New York's center of fashion and wealth. It was an informal party—just the sort of gayly intimate, well-bred little affair that Jerry's beautiful young wife enjoyed, and at which she played the rôle of hostess so gracefully. For young Mrs. Goodkind had cleverness in addition to beauty, and charm in addition to cleverness,—and, take the three together, they make unassailably for success. Yes; Jerry often looked at her proudly and observed, "Takes me to pick a winner every time!" He had made no mistake when he had chosen Clare Jewett to preside over his home.

On this particular Saturday evening, George Goodkind was in his own library. He had gone there immediately after dinner to meet certain visitors in private—business visitors. Clare could be counted on to make the guests happy! They were gathered now in the music-room where Dilly Gilliam, at the piano, was playing one of the syncopations popular at that time, while others danced. A few chatted cosily in corners and among the plants of the conservatory. Clare moved among them, keeping everyone delighted and quite unconscious of the absence of the host.

In his library beyond, George Goodkind waited, a

card in his hand. The servant who had brought it moved noiselessly about, switching on the lights, bringing forward chairs. He slipped away . . . .

A few moments later the door opened without a knock, and Benfield entered abruptly. He, too, had been summoned from the gay group. He crossed the room and came close to Goodkind.

"What the h——!" he said.

"Shut the door," responded his host in a low tone. Then, as Benfield did so, he handed him the card.

Benfield stared at it. "Labor conciliators!" he read aloud. He threw the card upon the table. Again he said, "What the h——!"

Goodkind shrugged. "What are labor conciliators? Mostly thugs. When you've been a director in a coal mining company a little longer you'll know. We've got a million dollars' worth of 'em handling this strike."

"Police duty?"

"No; spies and agents *provacateur*. I hate the breed, but what are you going to do about it? This fellow, Max Stedtman, got into the union five or six years ago, and now he's one of the delegation they've sent up to me . . . . Where's Jerry?"

"I gave him the high sign," Benfield replied.

Goodkind reached for his cigars upon the table. It was the table of the man of business, littered with files of papers, scattered letters, a hundred small utilities; but the room was the luxurious library of the man of wealth and education. Not only was there a row of law books, but there were many bookcases well

filled with volumes including rare editions; scattered here and there were priceless treasures from the palaces of Venice and the art collections of Rome.

"Smoke?" he offered.

"Thanks." Benfield, taking the cigar, inquired, "Why didn't you go down to West Virginia?"

"Had to look over that power plant in Canada."

"Oh, yes!"

"Anyway, what do I know about coal mining?"

"You're president of the company."

"Yes, but that means digging up money—not coal. I've never set foot in West Virginia in my life; and I don't want to!" Goodkind added coolly.

"Yes, but," protested the other. "In a serious situation like this——"

"I sent Jerry," the other explained. "Jerry has a dozen qualifications and no scruples. *And,*" he added with significance, "I sent Gilchrist!"

"Hmph!" grunted Benfield. "Who has scruples and no qualifications!"

Goodkind smiled with good temper, but he added firmly, "Yes! Thus striking a balance! I mean that, Benfield—no joke. Don't make any mistake about Gilchrist. He's a valuable man. I didn't hire him because I was sorry he got fired out of the church—and only a little because I knew his father. I hired him because he had theories, and I wanted to try 'em out!"

Benfield grunted more loudly, a grunt in which disgust and indignation mingled. "I'll say he's got theories!" he snarled.

"Yes, and the remarkable part of it is—sometimes

they work! They worked up at that power plant. A year ago I wouldn't have taken it as a gift. Gilchrist applied a little soft soap——"

"Soft soap or gold dust?" interrupted the scoffing Benfield.

"Well, both, if you like; but, damn it, Charlie, with all the increased wages and decreased working hours, the plant's making money now for the first time!"

The door opened again, and this time it was Jerry who entered. Like the others, he, too, was in evening dress. His face did not wear the customary vivid smile; in fact, it was decidedly sullen, as a result partly of brandy, partly of resentment. He closed the door behind him and came forward to join the older men.

"There's something *in* Gilchrist!" his father was at that moment observing.

"Mostly bugs!" snapped young Goodkind, his scowl of resentment deepening at Gilchrist's name.

His father turned upon him sharply. "All right!" he replied in a voice that was a defiant retort.

Jerry went on, his tone even more sullen than his face. "I told you what he was doing at the mines," he said. "Now he wires you, 'Everything settled if you accede to rational conditions,' and up comes this delegation! What are the conditions? I'll tell you now: surrender! You're crazy if you see these workmen! We've nothing to discuss! They're our mines, and we'll run 'em as we like! If this philanthropist of yours carries out instructions we've got 'em whipped!" He swung around, turning to Benfield. "What was the idea of the high sign?" he asked.

Benfield picked up the card and showed it to him by way of reply, while Goodkind explained, "Stedtman."

"Where is he?" Jerry demanded.

"On the way up," his father told him.

"Of course, we're leaving our guests flat!" Jerry complained.

"Your wife's in there!" put in Benfield. From his point of view, that was what a wife was for—to be made of use in other lines, while a husband attended to business.

Jerry had misgivings on this score. "Clare resents our talking business at home," he muttered, disturbed and still sullen.

"Resents!" cried his father, whose ideas to some extent coincided with Benfield's. "And you haven't been married a year! Palaver's a wife's job! They oil the machinery while we shovel in coal!"

The servant again entered the room, announcing, "Mr. Stedtman," and the agent appeared. He seemed more than ever the ferret—lean, agile, prying . . . .

"How do, Stedtman," Goodkind said. "This is Mr. Benfield—one of our new directors." Benfield gruffly acknowledged the introduction. "You know my son."

Stedtman nodded. "Saw him down to Black River," he responded, and, at a gesture from Goodkind, the men gathered around the table, seating themselves for conference.

Goodkind opened it. "Well?" he began.

"Well," responded Stedtman, "the committee's on its way."

"Who's in this delegation?"

"I'm chairman. We got a Pole called Umanski."

Goodkind reached for a note pad. "U-m-a-n-s-k-i," he wrote.

"He's a radical," went on the agent. "You can't do anything with him. But there's a fellow named Joe Hennig——"

"Who'll listen to reason?"

"I think so."

"Why do you think so?" demanded Goodkind.

"Because he's got a pretty wife."

A twitch passed over Jerry's somewhat intoxicated face, but passed unnoticed. Benfield broke in:

"What the h— has that go to do with it?"

"Lots," replied Stedtman. "Pretty wives like pretty things. Hennig's in debt, and this girl's on his neck every minute. She's a peach." He turned to the younger man. "You know her, Mr. Jerry!"

Jerry's brows drew into a black knot. "No," he groaned out his reply.

"Don't know Pearl Hennig?" exclaimed the surprised Stedtman.

Jerry's voice rose. *"No!"* he declared shrilly.

Stedtman reined in his surprise. "Oh! I thought I saw you talking to her once. Anyhow, Gilchrist knows her——*well!*" he added with narrowed lids.

Benfield took it up. "You mean—"

"I mean I wouldn't mention Gilchrist to Joe Hennig," Stedtman returned significantly. And at this Benfield drew a long, deeply-meaningful whistle.

Goodkind broke in angrily. "That's rot!" he declared. In spite of moments of indignation at his old

friend's son, he was ready to defend him against any attack of this sort.

Stedtman probably deemed it wiser to drop the matter just then. "Anyhow, Hennig and me are two votes, and I figure Hennig's'll cost about——" The man stopped short and his small, ferret-like eyes travelled in a swift, appraising glance from face to face of the men before him.

"I figure it," he said finally, "at about fifteen thousand dollars."

"Whew!! exploded Benfield, and similar exclamations broke from the others.

"I don't like bribery," objected Goodkind stoutly.

"Not when it isn't necessary," added Benfield.

"And," continued his friend, "Gilchrist wired yesterday, 'Everything settled'." He was plainly puzzled by the contradictions of the situation.

Jerry shrugged with a sneer. "On conditions!" he put in.

"Yeh!" cried Stedtman. "On *their* conditions! Take it from me, this Gilchrist has doubled-crossed you!"

"I told you!" cried Benfield with angry satisfaction.

"He's a——" Jerry began, but never revealed what, at that moment, he believed Daniel to be, for Stedtman was going on:

"He's been at union meetings! *He* got 'em to send this delegation, and he tried to get 'em to turn down Hennig—our one best bet! *You take it from me*——"

Goodkind, self-contained and quiet, interrupted the excited speaker. "I won't take it from you, Stedtman." He looked at the others. "Or from anybody

else," he added. "I know this man." His eye was steady and defiant, and as Stedtman met it, the ferret-like little man shrank, cowed.

"Well," he muttered sulkily, "he's gone around talking compromise. Compromise ain't no way to settle a strike. Givin' 'em confidence. Why, we got a couple o'hundred representatives among the workmen tellin' 'em they got no chance. We got special police clubbin' 'em every time they try to hold a meetin'. You wouldn't believe what we done down there in the way o' harmony!"

"It's all been done before," Goodkind retorted.

"Never no completer!" protested the agent. "We're workin' the black list, and, if a man opens his mouth too wide at a meetin', somebody—he don't know who —tips the gover'ment that he's a 'red'. We got 'em so they ain't sure o' their own brothers. We're postin' bills in seven languages, sayin': 'Why should workmen mistrust the company? This is the land of opportunity! America is calling you—GO BACK TO WORK!' The boss has a scheme now to start a riot between the Poles and the Wops! And you know the end o' that! Troops, and scabs, and machine guns! What stopped it? One gent that don't know nothin' about harmony, or co-operation, or nothin'—except hangin' around after a skirt!" He looked directly at Benfield as he reverted to his charge, sure of finding a backer in that quarter. "If you got to descend to bribery now," he cried, "don't blame me! *Blame Gilchrist!*"

Benfield rose and struck the table with his open

hand. "He's right!" he shouted, snatching eagerly at any charge against the man he hated. "Ab-so-*lute*-ly right!"

Jerry, too, rose. "Of course he's right!" he cried, lurching a trifle and steadying himself by the table. "Wha'd'ya expect of a man kicked out of the church for Bolshevism?"

Benfield bellowed: "He ought to be brought back right now!"

"He's coming back——" began Goodkind, rising to explain, but at that moment the servant once more entered with an announcement.

"Yes—what is it?" Goodkind demanded impatiently.

"Two men to see Mr. Stedtman," the servant replied.

"Good!" from Benfield.

"Bring them in," Goodkind gave the order, and the servant departed. Stedtman seized upon the moment of being alone with his employers.

"Now look," he said to them in a low, hurried voice, "don't try nothin' before Umanski! Just give us an excuse to vote *right*, and then we'll go out, and get rid of him, and I'll slip back with Hennig! Now then—" His sharp ears, like those of a small, furtive animal, had caught the approach of footsteps, even over the soft rugs in the hall outside. He struck a sudden, skillful pose, taking on the *rôle* of obsequious spokesman, as quickly as he might have donned a mask.

"It's very good of you gentlemen to see us," he was whining to his employers as the workmen entered. "I was goin' to meet my friends outside—but you been so kind and agreeable——"

Oily with the smirk of hypocrisy, he turned to the two workmen who stood just inside the library door. "Oh, hello, Joe!" he cried with cordiality.

"Hello, Max!" Joe Hennig gave him a nod of fellowship. But Umanski, a towering giant, gazed down at him from the depths of fathomless black eyes which bore no trust, and whose gaze was so direct, so challenging, that the ferret-like Stedtman cringed.

"You said you be on sidewalk," said Umanski, and in the simple words lay no light charge.

CHAPTER XI.

The Giant.

Umanski was a huge Pole, towering above six feet in height, with a frame like that of a steel structure. He walked with shoulders erect, eyes that looked you squarely in the face; he was grave, and slow of speech, but he suggested some stream that shows an almost motionless surface but conceals currents unknowable.

Physically, he was a curious creature. Whatever flesh he may once have possessed had been starved off; he was all bone and brawn. His movements were large, slow, clumsy; his features heavy and crudely chiselled. But in that face shone something strangely like poetry—something born of silence and suffering. He was clumsily arrayed in his best, which in no wise obliterated the picture of the man working in clothes, his sleeves being rolled up over his fleshless, muscular arms. As Goodkind's eyes fell upon them it occurred to him that they were terrible arms—they were folded, now, as he stood there, but if they ever seized, their grip would be like that of a dragon.

The ferret faced him with evident trepidation as he met the great Pole's utterance,—merely the reminder that Stedtman had promised to be on the sidewalk, but nevertheless a veiled accusation. The spokesman had broken his promise to his confederates—why?

"I just really got in myself!" he protested glibly but

nervously. "This is Mr. Goodkind," he went on, performing his introductions with a great air of importance. "He's the president. And these here are a couple o' directors. Well," he concluded, "now you two have come, we can all get down to business!" And, taking the lead, Stedtman sat, without waiting for an invitation. Umanski stared silently at his temerity in doing so; and yet, while without the showy bravado of Stedtman, one might have seen that the deeper fear was not in him.

"Smoke?" inquired Goodkind affably. He offered the humidor to Joe Hennig, who seized greedily upon one of the expensive cigars; Stedtman, rising, reached out and helped himself. But when Goodkind approached Umanski, the giant Pole stood motionless; he did not unfold those great terrible steel arms; he did not, apparently, even see the box. Staring straight before him into vacancy he stood, and Goodkind, puzzled, slowly turned away. Something in this man baffled him.

Joe Hennig, assuming a blustering tone that made abundant noise through the room but lacked all the courage, the dignity, the independence which had made that one brief utterance of Umanski's so impressive, now pushed forward. He addressed himself to Goodkind, as president.

"I guess you know all about our grievances," he began loudly.

"I didn't know you had any." Goodkind assumed, at least, whether he felt it or not, imperturbality.

"You didn't know we had any——" blustered Joe,

still louder, but with an emptiness behind the bluster that suggested the toy balloon easily pricked to collapse.

"Aw, you fellows are never satisfied!" put in Benfield.

Goodkind went on. "You're getting plenty for what you do! What are you complaining about? You've left good jobs to follow a lot of idle, discontented agitators! We've got to win this fight on principle! The work's there! I pay what I can get men for, and not a cent more! Take it or leave it!"

Joe snarled. "We got to hang together to get anything!"

"You're hanging," retorted Goodkind, "and what have you got?"

The piano in the next room, upon which a young man had been rather wildly performing, now rose to a deafening climax which for the moment caused a halt in the discussion. The crash of chords, the clamor were followed by silence; and then, out of the silence, a violin began, softly, rather wistfully . . . .

Umanski suddenly spoke. His arms were still folded, his giant body still stood motionless just inside the door. His stare seemed to cover everyone in the room, and, at the same time, no-one; it was as though he looked at the others and yet through, beyond them. His voice fell heavy, monotonous, unemotional—as stolid as its owner.

"I work twelve hours," said the giant. "Every day. Thirty years. Got nothing." His face and voice did not change; there was no misery, no appeal, no fear, no

whimper. He merely threw the facts down upon the table before these employers of his, to be viewed.

Benfield snapped wrathfully. "Why should you have? An untrained man——" he began. And Jerry broke in upon him with further accusation:

"You don't even know English!"

Umanski replied, still in those heavy, unemotional accents, still with that stolid, impersonal stare:

"How I gonna learn English—work twelve hours a day?"

Jerry flung his head. "Nobody asked you to take the job!" he retorted. "Nobody asked you to come over here! You're not an American!"

This time Umanski's glance turned slightly toward him. "I was American," he rejoined.

Jerry sneered. "When?" he demanded with utmost scorn.

"When I fight . . . . in the war."

For a moment there was a dead silence. Not a man there could, on the instant, retort. The war and its meaning were too close, then, to all. Even Jerry's sneer died out, and he preferred to take up the discussion from another angle.

"Well," he said impatiently, turning to his father, "We're not getting anywhere. We've been over this ground a dozen times!"

The president turned to the Pole. "What do you want?" he inquired, not unkindly.

At the older man's voice, which perhaps suggested, at that moment, some possibility of sympathy, a flash of emotion lighted the stolid face. Umanski addressed

him directly now, and with a plea in his tone.

"I wanna chance to learn!" he cried. "I wanna chance to live! I wanna see——sun!"

"Wha'd'ya mean—*son?*" demanded Jerry, and, simultaneously, his father inquired, "*Your* son?"

"God's sun!" cried Umanski. "I never see him. Go to mines—him not up. Work in mines—him not see. Go home—him gone. Got baby five years ago. Never see *him*. Go to mines—*him* not up. Come back—*him* asleep. Go home one day—*him* gone."

"Dead?" asked Goodkind, rather gently, indeed.

The giant nodded. "My wife say, 'Good! Not such many to feed'!"

The momentary silence that followed irritated Jerry. It made him feel uncomfortable, and Jerry greatly disliked feeling uncomfortable. "When you worked you had enough to eat, didn't you?" he demanded.

"Yes," slowly replied the Pole. "Work twelve hours a day and got enough to eat—so can work some more. Always work. Get up—work—come back—sleep—get up—work. Never got time to talk to wife—never got time to talk to nobody—never got nowhere. Never save nothing."

Joe Hennig by this time deemed it proper that he should enter into the argument, having come as a member of the delegation. "It ain't fair!" he broke out in a noisy whine. Joe was devoid of ideas which might add to the argument's effectiveness, but he could always be counted upon to be heard.

No-one, however, heeded him. The Pole went on:

"We got no decent place live. Me and six families—

we live in one house you own. We got one room upstairs; two down cellar. Sleep there. Eat—cook—wash upstairs. See nothing but brick yard, and clothes hang up to dry. Wife—she carry water from yard. Me—I carry potato peeling out front. Him rot. If I don't like that, I quit—and starve!"

Jerry spoke scaldingly. "You want to live on Fifth Avenue, do you!"

"And *then* you'd find something to kick about!" added Benfield.

The Pole paid no heed to these observations; he seemed in the grip of an idea, a cause that was so much greater than any petty bickering that he barely heard them, if at all.

"If I don't like, other mans will," he continued. "Other mans take my job. I got little girl twenty years old. Awful nice little girl. Got gold hair. Got blue eyes. Her take sick. She sorry she's sick. She wanna go church. She ask me, 'Pop, buy me new dress for church. Buy me pretty *pink* dress.' Where I get him? We hire doctor once, and he say, 'Air—sunshine—milk—eggs!' Where I get air—sunshine—milk—eggs? Got no job. My little girl, she cough, and cough, and one night she die. I tell you we got right to quit! We got right to hang together! We got right to fight—to live—and, by God, we gonna fight—we gonna live—*we gonna*—BY GOD!"

Suddenly the music, which had mounted into a lively dance melody, broke off. From the adjoining room could be heard the patter of applause. There was laughter, chatter, a gay hiatus; the library door burst

open, and into the room ran the madcap Dilly, panting and laughing, the glow of brilliant electric lights turning her mass of elaborately dressed hair to pure gold. Her fresh young face smiled roguishly; her gown, it chanced, was not only exquisitely pretty, but it was *pink;* her jewels, incidentally, were worth the ransom of a dozen Umanskis.

But it was not the jewels, not the artificial beauties of Dilly, that Umanski saw! Coming in a rush from the music-room, she fairly ran into the giant as he stood near the door; and, as he turned in surprise looking down at her, he saw only that here was a lovely slip of a creature, the age of his own Mary—a creature with laughter in her blue eyes, with gold shining in her hair, and with the *pink* dress—the beautiful *pink* dress . . .

"Now look here, Jerry—you're not going to desert——" she was crying audaciously, as she laid hold of the arm of her younger host. Then, suddenly aghast in the consciousness that she had broken in upon a serious conference, she drew back frightened. "Oh, I'm sorry—" she blundered, staring around at the frowning, assembled group, then at the giant with whom she had violently collided——

He was standing motionless, staring down at her. In her, he was confronted with his own daughter—the hair, the eyes, the slender figure, the youth . . . . For that moment, his eyes were those of one who meets an apparition . . . .

No, it was not an apparition. It was not his Mary. As the strange hallucination of an instant passed, he groped his way back to fact. And fact faced him in

the sight of a pretty, spoiled child of luxury arrayed in the beautiful pink dress for which his little girl had longed in vain—and wearing a gleaming necklace from which one pearl alone would have saved his little girl's life.

He stared at the pearls, then at the young wearer of them . . . . All at once, with a great sob, he put his hands to his face and dropped to a chair. It was as though a tornado of emotion passed over him; he was felled, like a tremendous tree.

Jerry, however, cast glances of scorn at the fallen giant, while he soothed Dilly's fright; and Benfield grunted disgustedly. But Goodkind nodded encouragingly, as Stedtman approached the seated man, and threw an arm over his shoulders, which perhaps bore some comfort, even though it may have been an arm of hypocrisy.

"I can't come now, Dilly," Jerry said apologetically. "You'll have to wait."

His father added his own apology. "Ask the ladies to stay in the drawing-room," he said. "We'll join them in a few minutes."

"Yes—certainly," stammered Dilly. "I'm *so*—SO —sorry!" She slipped away. She really looked, at that moment, a grieved and contrite young woman. But as she entered the gay music-room once more, she was met by a fresh burst of popular melody.

> How're you going to keep him down on the farm,
> After he's seen Paree?

And on the instant some one caught her up into the

dance, and her shriek of reckless laughter pierced to the room she had just left.

Stedtman, his arm still about the giant's shoulders, signalled with the other to Goodkind—a signal which advised, "Go ahead!" Goodkind, however, felt some compunctions.

"I think we'd better let this go for tonight," he said kindly.

But Umanski himself took up the matter. With astonishing will power, he drew sudden rein upon his emotions.

"No! No let go!" he said. He rose, all at once quiet, completely master of himself. That a man capable of such intensity of feeling was also capable of mastering it, showed the steel of which he was made.

"Me—I'm all right," he continued. "Excuse!"

The humanness that was within Goodkind, despite certain hard traits, showed at its best at that hour. He had seen that the man was genuinely moved and he couldn't help pitying him. But the delay was annoying, and something must be done.

"You're a litle upset," he said, "and we have guests. Besides, Gilchrist will be here in half an hour, and I want to talk to him before I say anything definite. Suppose we all meet here tomorrow at noon."

Joe Hennig had turned with an angry snap, like that of a dog, at mention of Daniel's name, and now he blurted out: "Not Gilchrist!"

"No," replied Goodkind, "just we six . . . . and, maybe, one or two more of our directors."

"All right!" Stedtman agreed promptly.

But Umanski was not to be put off. Having set aside his personal grief, he was once more determined to battle for his cause, and without compromise.

"I wanna know what we gonna do—*tonight!*" he insisted.

"We're going to get together," responded Goodkind. "You fellows have got the wrong idea. We're not tyrants, or monsters. We're Christians and we want to act like Christians. Only—we've got to live, too. We've got to have the things we're used to, just as you have. But I think I can promise, if the strike's called off, you men will be kept, and put back just where you were . . . . Ring the bell, Jerry."

Jerry cheerfully obeyed. There was a pause while the group waited to break up.

Benfield got up restlessly. "Well—I guess you don't want me any more," he observed.

"No," Goodkind replied.

"Thanks." The other departed; business was business to Benfield, and when business was not being carried on he was like a tethered horse.

Goodkind, awaiting the servant with inward impatience, turned to Joe Hennig to make talk.

"You live in Black River?" he inquired.

"Yes."

"Married?"

"You betcha! Prettiest girl in West Virginia! We only been married a year. I got her in the five-and-ten-cent store. I mean, that's where she was workin'. She's at her sister's now—up to Pittsburg. Left the day before I was elected to come here." Proudly he

added: "I sent her a telegram!"

"You don't say so!" Goodkind indulgently showed admiration at the achievement of sending a telegram. He turned impatiently to Jerry, however. "Anything the matter with that bell?" he demanded.

"The man's busy, I suppose. I'll show them out."

"If you will . . . . Well, goodnight!" Goodkind turned to the men, shaking hands pleasantly with Stedtman and Hennig. But, as his frankly friendly hand was proffered to Umanski, the giant remained immobile. He no more saw the hand than he had seen the proffered cigar awhile before. He was completely preoccupied; his slow mind had been absorbed in thinking out the earlier declaration.

"What about this here twelve-hour day?" he demanded.

"We'll consider that after the strike's called off," replied Goodkind affably.

"And the twenty-four-hour shift?" went on the Pole.

"We'll consider that, too. Meanwhile—you go back just where you were!"

The giant's mind may have been slow in its workings, but it went directly, surely to its conclusions. "Then what good we gain by strike?" he demanded.

"Nothing's ever gained by quarreling. You'll find that out some day."

The giant faced him squarely, and again the thought flashed through Goodkind that the huge, folded arms were terrible—like weapons, lying still and ready to strike.

"Some day something be gain!" cried the man.

"Some day we gonna win! *This*—he don't go on always! *You* see!"

Jerry broke in with an insolence of tone and glance. "Are you ready?" he demanded.

Hennig nodded, embarrassed, and went out through the door that Jerry was holding open. Umanski followed, but without embarrassment; and, as he was about to pass Jerry in the doorway, he stopped short and looked the younger man full in the eye, with immeasurable scorn.

"*You* see!" he cried to him, and passed out.

Stedtman paused long enough to say to the Goodkinds in a whisper, "We'll be back later!" and he, too, passed into the hall.

"Swine!" observed Jerry as he went after them to do butler's duty. And the elder host found himself alone in his library.

Alone among the precious books, the rare treasures from Europe that his wealth had bought. Alone among his piles of business papers and letters, his law books, private telephone, ledgers—all the paraphernalia that went to the acquiring of that wealth. He sat down wearily in his desk chair, and dark lines of worry shadowed his face. He sat there for long moments, tired and disturbed, nervously picking up papers and putting them down—up and down . . . .

The servant entered. "Did you ring, sir?"

"Half an hour ago." The master's tone was far from pleasant.

The servant indicated a box which he was carrying. "I was signing for this," he explained, but Goodkind,

fumbling with his papers, did not look up. "Can I do anything for you, sir?"

"Yes. Get me a drink."

The servant hesitated. Goodkind took a key from his pocket and handed it to the man, who turned to a cellarette that stood in a corner of the library, took out a decanter and glasses, relocked the little mahogany door, and brought tray and key to his master.

"Thanks," Goodkind said shortly, reaching toward the glass as though in it relief from worry might lie. Then, as the man was softly departing, he called him back. "And, Riggs," he said, "if Mr. Stedtman comes back tonight—with one of the other men—I'll see them in here."

"Very good, sir."

As the man was leaving the room, Clare Goodkind came in. He spoke to her.

"This package just came for you, Madam," he said, and deposited before her the box which he carried.

It was a large flat box showing, in its design, the touch of severe elegance that only the most expensive caterers to women's wealthy tastes affect. It was such a box as the fashionable modistes, furriers, and toggery shops deliver their dearly-bought treasures in.

Clare paused, looking down at it where it lay upon a small table.

"Another!" she said under her breath. One who had seen her eyes at the moment when she uttered this enigmatic word might have wondered what secret tragedy lay behind them.

CHAPTER XII.

Life and Clare.

Goodkind looked up as the servant addressed Clare. "Everybody gone?" he asked. He hoped for an affirmative; he was weary with all this bickering, and he wanted the house cleared out, and peace in which he could transact business. Under happier conditions, he welcomed the gayety which Clare had brought into his home, and enjoyed the guests whom she selected so tactfully; but tonight he was worn out, he told himself.

"No," she answered, "They're all down in the billiard room." As she spoke, it occurred to her father-in-law that she, too, looked a bit worn; beautiful, always, and perfectly dressed—long and slim in pale green, like a stem, something graceful and bending. But she was paler than usual, and her eyes were uncommonly large and darkly shadowed.

"We wanted to make up a couple of tables at bridge," she went on, "but, with the men in here . . . . as usual . . . . " She broke off. "Where's Jerry?" she asked abruptly.

"I don't know." Goodkind turned as if to resume his looking over of papers.

But Clare did not turn to go. She came forward, drew near her father-in-law.

"I've seen him just ten minutes this week," she said.

Her voice was low, but there was an edge to it.

"He's only been back three hours," Goodkind flung over his shoulders in response.

"Well . . . . I wish he wouldn't break up my dinner parties."

With some impatience Goodkind pushed away his papers and looked up as though, if conversation were forced upon him, he must try to accept the martyrdom. He glanced at the box. "What have you got there?" he inquired, to change the subject. If only she would go! He was extremely fond of his daughter-in-law, but it was unlike her usual tactfulness to thrust herself upon him in his library when he obviously wanted to be let alone.

But still she showed no intention of going. She stood, graceful, beautiful, subtly suggesting a drooping flower on that long slim stem of pale green; her eyes, dark and melancholy, were looking at the box upon the table. She spoke as though thinking aloud, not lifting her eyes:

"Another . . . . substitute . . . ." Her voice caught; almost as though she were stifling a sob.

"Substitute for what?" demanded Goodkind bruskly.

For a moment she did not reply. She reached toward the box, began slowly to untie its cord with her long, slender, exquisitely graceful hands. They were a delight to watch; something strong lay behind their supple grace, everything they did was done with clear-cut movements. Upon the left she wore the diamond of betrothal—a royal stone, clear as water, large, cut to reveal a thousand shifting lights. And the plain

"And as I speak, the face of each of you proclaims him convicted."

gold band. No more. It was like Clare's delicate taste to "wear the very best and then stop," as her husband put it. Always perfection in choice, always simplicity. The fact that this regal simplicity was by far the most expensive taste merely delighted him the more, since he could abundantly meet her bills.

With a weary indifference she finished untying the cord, lifted the cover from the box. "Substitute—for my husband's time," she replied at length, gazing now at the contents of the box. Still utterly indifferent, she drew forth and held up to view a magnificent sable scarf. It was worth at least a neat ransom for a not-too-important prince. Clare looked at it for a moment where it hung over her wrist, her indifference changing to scorn, scorn to loathing; with a sudden passion she flung it from her.

"Another substitute," she cried, her dark eyes flashing, "for my husband's love and companionship!"

Goodkind reached and picked up the fur, making an effort to pass over the situation lightly. "Mmm!" he exclaimed in admiration, holding up the superb skins where the light fell upon their rich dusky gleam. "You don't seem much surprised! Most women would get a little excited, at the very least, over a present like *that!*"

"Would they?" she cried with irony. "Do you know what that present means?" she demanded, suddenly coming close to her father-in-law, speaking directly into his eyes. "Whenever Jerry's been away longer than usual, or done something he's a little ashamed of, there's a box from Cartier or Revillon!"

"Must have been a whopper this time!" laughed Goodkind. His laugh was a trifle uncomfortable, but he was determined not to give way and permit a scene.

"Yes," responded Clare, slipping back into her tone of weary misery. She took the scarf, again held it up, gazed at it dully.

"Pretty generous husband—if you ask *me!*" continued Goodkind.

"Yes." Still the weary dullness. Clare returned the scarf to its box.

He rose, thrust his hands into his pockets, and strode thoughtfully down the long room, staring at the floor with knotted brow. "Upon my word, Clare," he said, though not looking at her as he spoke, "I don't know what you women want! A man works his heart and soul out to get you things, and still you're not satisfied!"

She sank into one of the chairs beside his study table, and now her elbows rested upon it, her forehead rested upon her upraised palms. Her eyes were closed as though she were absorbed in profound thought.

"Maybe," she said at length, still with closed eyes, "we'd like a little of that 'heart and soul'—for ourselves." If he had looked at her then, he might have seen that her low, delicately molded bosom shuddered beneath the filmy lace of her gown; that the precious pendant of emeralds—Clare's favorite stone, a *penchant* in which Jerry had lavishly indulged her—quivered like a tiny, wind-blown leaf above the lace.

Goodkind continued to stride over the antique Chinese rugs of his luxury, trampling them with such im-

patience that he might have been using a doormat on a muddy day.

"Heart and soul!" he shouted, "And what a man trades 'em for! You expect your husband to succeed, and at the same time give all his attention to you! You want him to have plenty of money and plenty of time! You're willing to take everything, but you're not willing to pay for it!" He wound up with a turn on his heel that brought him facing her, but still she did not look up. Her eyes were closed, her forehead lay in her long, outstretched palms."

She sighed. At length, "I suppose, everybody *must* pay," she said sadly.

"Surest thing you know!" Goodkind struck a posture before her unseeing eyes, placing his hands on his hips and assuming the wisdom and severity of a teacher about to read a stern lesson to a rebellious pupil. "You women are all alike!" he began. "My poor wife—*she* had everything, too—just like you, Clare. And in spite of it, I used to catch her crying in a corner!" At the memory he paused; his air of lecturer departed, a look of helpless pondering stole across his face as he went on, half in reverie.

"My wife," he said, his voice lower now. "We never seemed to understand each other—after we got *this*." His eyes involuntarily swung about the room, over the priceless rugs, the art treasures, the luxurious furnishings. "She was a good wife, too . . . . But the best of you never seem to want what you have."

Still Clare did not speak, did not shift her position. Still her eyes remained closed. He took up his rumina-

tions again.

"Sometimes," he said—and a queer tone, almost wistful, crept into the gritty, business-like voice of this elderly man of affairs—"sometimes I think we don't any of us really want what we struggle so hard to get. Sometimes—I think—we're all wrong!" Then with a quick, impatient movement, he roused himself from these foolish and unpractical musings. He took out his watch, looked at it, turned away quickly as though to imply that it was time to be up and doing.

"Well," he said briskly. "I guess I'll go downstairs!"

"I wish you would," Clare responded. Her voice was not only low as it crept from behind the palms, but oddly muffled——

"Great Scott!" Goodkind started at the sound, stepped quickly up to her, leaned over her where she sat, peered at her sharply—

"You're not crying?" he demanded.

For upon the polished surface of his study table he had caught the fall of a tear. It sparkled; another fell, catching upon the emerald leaf this time, and shining there like a dewdrop upon the flashing green gems.

He drew her hands from her face, and she looked up at him, her big dark eyes swimming in their tears.

"My God!" he groaned. "Can you beat it?" He let her hands fall; scorn, pity, anger, affection, despair were oddly mingled in his tone, his gesture. He had been through this before long ago with his own wife, and here was Jerry's wife, whom he had supposed to possess common sense and charming reasonableness,

going through the same performance! Tears! Good heavens—more tears! Could you, indeed, beat it?

Clare rose, pressed a cobweb of a lace handkerchief against her eyes. "Go on. I'll be down in a minute," she said, turning from him to hide her face.

But Goodkind paused. She may have been devilishly annoying, but he was darned fond of the girl, anyhow, he told himself. "Tell Riggs, will you, if anyone comes I'll be—talking to Jerry," he said. Then, drawing close to her, he laid a fatherly hand upon her slender white shoulder where it escaped from the green silk and the lace foam.

"And Clare—buck up!" he said kindly. "There are people worse off than we are . . . . and it's a great life if you don't weaken!"

He departed, and Clare, with a long, unhappy sigh, faced the fact that she must rouse herself, must return to her guests. She stepped to the antique French mirror that hung above the fire-place; it revealed a face suddenly gone haggard, with the dark tracks of tears.

"I'm a fright!" she murmured miserably, and whipped out a tiny powder-puff. She was endeavoring to restore normal conditions to her maltreated face, when a step at the door startled her.

She turned, the tiny puff of Swan's-down with its dainty gold handle poised aloft—another of the countless precious trifles that had been her husband's gifts. Was it he, she wondered, who was entering now? Mingled emotions caused her to flush as she stood there in that instant of suspense; if it were Jerry, as she supposed, how should she meet him, what attitude

should she assume? She was weary of assuming attitudes, as a matter of fact. Wasn't it time, at last, for honesty? . . . . The swing of an entering coat—not an evening coat, but that of a plain business suit . . . . Daniel Gilchrist.

She started, then caught herself to poise. He, too, started, and showed a moment's impulse to retire. It was as though he did not wish to meet Clare. But she called out to him.

"Come in!" she cried brightly. "I'm just powdering my nose. Does that offend your reverence?" Had she been on the top wave of high spirits, her voice could not have been gayer, her smile more blithe.

There was no retreat, he saw. He accepted the situation, and came forward with a greeting after her own kind.

"On the contrary; I agree with the man who said, 'Put your trust in God, and keep your powder dry'," he responded, and they laughed together. Nothing but a frank and unemotional friendship could ever have existed between these two, one might have fancied.

"When did you get in?" Clare asked, putting away the powder puff and turning from the mirror for a chat.

"Half an hour ago."

"Had dinner?" Her hospitality was always thoughtful for everyone's comfort which was one of her most charming attributes as a hostess. Daniel could have a cosy although tardy bite served in the little breakfast-room at once, was her prompt thought.

"Yes—on the train," he replied. "I was starved. Thank goodness, they don't charge for dinner by the mile! . . . . Riggs said your father-in-law was in here."

"He'll be up in a moment. Won't you sit down? We haven't had five minutes together since——"

She halted. She had been going to say—how preposterous! She caught herself back, and ended, rather lamely, by indicating an especially comfortable chair.

Daniel hesitated, and did not at once take the chair. But she seated herself, and went on easily, having recovered herself:

"I understand you're very happy in your new—profession."

"Yes," he responded, taking the proffered chair. "I am."

"You've got . . . . everything . . . . you want?" She raised her eyes questioningly to his; he thought that he had never seen them so dark—almost black they appeared now, with heavy shadows about them; they were—yes, he couldn't help thinking it—they were sad eyes . . . . He wondered what it meant . . . .

"No," he replied. "I haven't everything I want. But I'm happy." His clear light-gray eyes under their fine black brows met hers.

"My father-in-law says if you settle this strike you're to be—but that's a business secret!" she told him gayly. He smiled faintly, but displayed no curiosity. She paused; his lack of curiosity foiled her in her attempt to tease, and she continued, "I suppose I might tell you!"

Still he merely smiled faintly, as she paused again. At length:

"He says it'll make you a big man in the company!" she declared. "With a tremendous salary!" Raising a warning finger, she whispered profoundly: "You mustn't give it away!"

"The secret?" Daniel asked.

"The salary!" she retorted, laughing. Then, more soberly, "I suppose you've got over that," she said. "So . . . . you don't really seem to have lost anything by giving up your church."

"No," he answered. "Queer as it seems, I sometimes think I've gained—in opportunity."

Clare's eyes wandered. When she spoke, it was more to herself than to him.

"Perhaps one *might* have eaten one's cake and had it, too," she strangely said.

The man before her caught the words, although they had not been intended for his ears. More than that, he caught their meaning—in a revealing flash he knew . . . .

"Clare!" He leaned forward tensely toward her. He could see the flutter of her low, girlish breast under the froth of lace.

She gave a little, nervous laugh. "You frightened me so that night," she said, "with the bugaboo of poverty! Don't you think there might have been a compromise? Something half way?"

His fine brows were knotted, his teeth were set as though to press back something—some emotion that rushed to the surface——

"Why open wounds that are beginning to heal?" he demanded. His tone was sharp with pain.

She gave a little shrug, smiled disdainfully. "Yours seem quite healed," she retorted.

He did not reply to that. For a long, tense moment he looked deep into her eyes, still clinching his teeth as though to force back the uprising tide of passion; then, in a voice that he strove to keep subdued, he asked:

"And you have everything *you* want?"

She met his eyes with determined *insouciance.* "Yes," she replied, and her voice was light, although the lurking shadow of melancholy in their depths did not escape his piercing gaze. What its meaning might be he did not know—did not dare guess. His place was to accept her words at their face value.

"You see——I *was* selfish," he said, "to ask you to give up the things that count so much with you, for those that count with me . . . . Afterward, when I knew you were to be married . . . . I was afraid for you . . . . and I was wrong again." He gave her a final searching look; yes, her smile was bright, her face showed warm color—surely it was the face of a happy woman! He rose, smiling back at her.

"You're happy!" he said heartily. "And I'm honestly glad!"

She sat without moving, and her face grew serious. "Are you—honestly—happy?" she demanded. She asked it as though searching for enlightenment on a difficult problem.

"Honestly." He said it with the ring of sincerity.

"In just helping others?" She was puzzled.

"In just helping others."

Clare shook her head, and a troubled doubt clouded her eyes. "I don't understand that," she said. She was like a child, seeking light on some appallingly hard lesson and unable to grasp the helpfully offered explanation—as though she wanted to understand, but could not . . . . She shook her head . . . .

"You will—some day," Daniel said, smiling gravely. He stepped forward to where she still sat, and laid a hand, like that of an affectionate elder brother, upon her shoulder.

"Some day you will, Clare," he said.

"Aha!"

A long-drawn-out sneering utterance from the doorway startled them both, and they looked up to see Jerry observing them.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Sable Scarf.

Jerry Goodkind had indulged in a liberal allowance of liquor at dinner that evening, the result of which had already displayed itself in his ugly temper during the conference with the miners. He had more recently added two or three brandies to the supply already laid in; and, although not actually drunk, he was even uglier than before, and ready to pick a quarrel at the slightest provocation. His customary smile was in full display now, as he stood in the doorway, hands in pockets, surveying his wife and Gilchrist; but it had never been seen in worse mood. In it lay the vilest of sneers, the basest of hatred. An old jealousy had flashed up at the instant he came upon the two there, with the man's hand upon his wife's shoulder.

He had never forgiven Daniel for having once been engaged to the woman whom he had triumphantly borne off in the end, and now he stood glancing back and forth from one to the other; reviewing the situation with an ugly meaning in his smile. The smile, indeed, was nothing less than a leer; he swaggered forward, hands in pockets.

"Hello, Gilchrist!" he cried, assuming nonchalance. "In early, aren't you?" Crossing the room, until he came close to the two, he stared at Daniel's hand where it had fallen from Clare's shoulder, then at the bare, lovely shoulder itself.

"I didn't mean to interrupt a tête-a-tête!" he cried significantly.

Clare returned his gaze with cold dignity. "You're not interrupting," she returned.

Jerry shrugged and turned on his heel. "Where's father?" he demanded.

"I thought he was with you," she replied indifferently.

"I stopped for refreshments," he observed, flashing a gay smile as if amused at his own foibles. He even, for the moment, assumed a staggering step, burlesquing his own condition—"Somewhat less than half shot, though," he added reassuringly. "Refreshments unusually well chosen tonight," he observed with a knowing wink. "Couldn't help stopping."

"I see you could not," Clare returned, still with cold aloofness.

Jerry laughed, with a perverse pleasure, it seemed, in having annoyed her, and turned to Daniel. "We've been having a genial evening with your delegation," he remarked. "That's why my wife's sore. Took too much of my father's and my time to talk things over with 'em. Clare wants us to be doing the social act in the drawing-room all the time, while the money goes on making itself."

Clare lifted her hands and let them fall with a gesture that expressed utter weariness touched with disgust as well. "I'm not 'sore'," she said, as one reiterates a statement often made. "I've been a little lonely."

Once more her husband swaggered toward her,

hands in pockets, with a world of insolence in his heavy eyes. Although Jerry was not far past thirty-five, his eyes were already taking on the look of the *roué's*—dark bags hung beneath them, the sign that a hard liver of sixty is wont to show.

"Lonely, were you?" He gave vent to an ugly laugh. "Well, I must say you don't look it!" He tweaked a gesture back over his shoulder, in the direction of Daniel. "I couldn't help going to Black River," he continued. "I didn't go for pleasure. Did I, Gilchrist?" he suddenly demanded, whirling about toward the other.

"No, indeed," Gilchrist replied with prompt heartiness. "There was work, and plenty of it—I can testify to that. I was sorry, in fact, that you had to leave as soon as you did," he added, seriously interested in the Black River topic.

The last words were uttered by Daniel in all friendliness, and he was totally unconscious of any dangerous significance hidden in them. It was a fact that Jerry had explained his necessity for leaving the mines earlier than "he wanted to," as he had put it; called back to New York by business and by his impatience to see Clare, he had said; and Daniel Gilchrist had accepted the explanation in good faith. He himself was without subterfuge, he never lied; the habit of evasion in which a certain type continually indulges was unknown to him. It did not occur to him that he was "giving Jerry away," or "letting out the cat"; and he looked up in honest surprise when Clare caught at his words.

"Leave—soon?" she exclaimed, puzzling. "Why, Jerry didn't leave much before you, did he?"

"Just a few——" began Jerry. With a flashing glance of warning cast at Daniel he rushed forward with a ready lie.

But Gilchrist did not observe the warning glance, did not in any way grasp the situation. He merely continued, in his honest fashion:

"He left only twenty-four hours ahead of me. He wanted to get back to you!" Daniel offered the explanation with a generous smile; whatever pain it cost *him* to see the happiness of these two, he was bound to smother it, and lay his small contribution of fuel on their glowing fire.

"But—" began Clare, still puzzling—"he's just *got* back—just a few hours ago—this evening!" There was a long moment of dead silence in the room; her warm cheeks went ashy, her eyes burned; suddenly, in a voice of repressed intensity, she demanded:

"Where have you been, Jerry?"

"Attending to business—*of course!*" he replied.

Still in that icy voice, Clare responded:

"Of course!"

Daniel Gilchrist searched her eyes, wondering what that tone signified, but he might as well have asked a a question of the Sphinx. She stepped to the table, lifted the beautiful sable scarf from its box; then, turning to her guest, she held out a hand.

"Good night, Dan!" she said. It was as casual, as matter-of-course as though a woman's agony did not lie concealed behind it.

Daniel took the hand for a Platonic instant, and, cheerily, he responded, "Good night!"

Without further words Clare started toward the door that led to the music-room, as though to return to her guests. But Jerry stopped her.

"Oh . . . . "he said, and paused, somewhat embarrassed. "So you—you *got* the furs!"

She turned, and swept him an ironic bow. "Yes—thank you!" she said.

He grinned. "Ah! Don't mention it!" he returned in like vein.

She paused, and the irony faded from her face, her voice. "I really mean—thank you," she said. The aloofness was gone now; something wistful lay in her eyes.

"I *am* grateful," she said slowly. "They are very beautiful. But——"

"But what?"

For a moment she hesitated, as though she wanted to go on, wanted to plead for the thing that her heart ached for. Then, curbing the impulse, she shook her head.

"Never mind," she said. "We'll talk about it some other time."

But unto Jerry had come the stubbornness and the persistence that often accompany intoxication. He had had just enough brandy to make him bad-tempered, cruel, and indiscreet.

"No!" he cried. "We'll talk about it *now!*" And he stepped up to her, laid a roughly grasping hand upon her wrist.

Daniel, realizing that his presence at a domestic scene was most embarrassing to Clare, at least, started toward the door. "I'll go," he said.

"No you won't!" cried Jerry, swinging about toward him, though with his harsh grasp still upon his wife's wrist. "You won't go! You'll stay right where you are!" His smile had vanished now; his face wore the dark, sullen fury of liquor.

"You made a crack about my leaving twenty-four hours before you did!" he cried. "How the devil do you know when I left? How do you know everything on the green apple?" Again he faced his wife. "If that's what you're sore about," he said, "for heaven's sake, drop it! I'm sorry you've been alone, and I've sent you a handsome gift as an apology!" With a gesture of impetuous anger he flung away her arm. The wrist was reddened from his rough grasp.

During all this time she had been holding the sable scarf in her other hand, and now, freed, she walked to the table and laid it down there.

"I don't want it," she said icily. Deep anger burned in her eyes, but she was completely mistress of herself. "I don't want to be paid," she went on, still in that dreadful, repressed tone, "for shutting my eyes to any insulting thing you choose to do!" Since he had forced her to endure this scene in the presence of another, she had determined now, in one swift moment of thinking it over, to let him have the full frankness that he had driven her to.

But, having brought this publicity upon himself, Jerry was now enraged at the result. "And I don't

propose," he shouted, "to be made a blackguard before strangers!"

"Dan isn't a stranger," she returned quietly. "And I don't want to make you a blackguard. Only . . . . since you've insisted on the truth . . . . She turned to her old friend. "Dan," she asked, "when *did* my husband leave Black River?"

Gilchrist looked first Jerry, then Clare, straight in the eyes. He felt that evasion was impossible; but there was no need for more than a statement of one fact. Hoping that this might relieve the tension, he replied:

"I haven't seen him since Thursday." If Daniel Gilchrist knew more than he told, at least he was perfectly honest in what he did tell, and Jerry jumped at the incompleteness of the report.

"*There* you have it!" he cried. "He hasn't *seen* me since Thursday! Does it occur to you that may have been because *he* wasn't in Black River himself?"

"No," Clare replied calmly.

Daniel smiled kindly at them both. "As a matter of fact, I wasn't," he put in.

"Oh!" sneered Jerry, implying that *now* confession was imminent! "Where were you, then?"

"At the mines," replied Gilchrist.

"Is that the truth?" came Clare's even, icy tones.

"Of course it's the truth!" Jerry shouted. "And if it wasn't, I don't see that you've any right to ask questions! I haven't done anything that wasn't in the bargain! I haven't done anything that every man doesn't do!" He had wrought himself, by this time, to a high

pitch of rage; inflamed by liquor, he was gesticulating grotesquely, his face heavily flushed.

Clare looked him full in the eye and responded, still in those unbroken tones of full self-command:

"Every man—perhaps—but one!"

Jerry knew her meaning, knew it on the instant. It fired his fury to blood heat. "Gilchrist! My God!" he cried, naming for her the one whom she had not named aloud. "Now we've got it!" He shook an infuriated fist, first at his wife, then at the man of whom jealousy was now consuming him.

"If you'd only married him!" he raged on. "He's good, because he says so! You ought to've been here a minute ago—when the company detective warned us not to mention Gilchrist to Joe Hennig!"

Gilchrist shot forward with one long, lean movement of his powerful frame. For the instant there was threat in the movement. "You mean——" he began.

From under his heavy lids Jerry swung him a vile glance. "I mean Pearl Hennig!" he retorted.

Whatever impulse of wrath had pushed Gilchrist forward, he had it under control now. "Pearl Hennig?" he exclaimed, with more amazement than anger. "Why, *you*—you *know* that's not true!" If the human desire to settle with this half-intoxicated, wholly vile man lay in Daniel Gilchrist's heart at that moment, at least he must master it for Clare's sake.

She faced him earnestly. "I *know* it's not true!" she cried.

"Do you?" sneered Jerry. His lips were parted, no doubt to utter more inuendo, more filthy accusations;

but at that moment the confusion of excited voices was heard in the hall outside, a turmoil of some sort. It arrested all three. The voice of Max Stedtman rose, shrill and angry, about the others:

"Say—now, listen! You behave yourself!" he was shouting.

Another voice, more shrill, struck back:

"Behave! Hell!" It was the voice of Joe Hennig.

Jerry recognized them both. The delegation had returned—two of them, at least, as privately agreed. As he realized that they were here, inspiration came to him. They could be of use—at once. They could bear witness. He shouted to his wife:

"Ask Stedtman! Ask Hennig! There they are, outside! We'll hear what they have to say about all this! And before you make up your mind where *I* was yesterday, ask where *he* was—" with a thumb jerked in Gilchrist's direction.

"Behave, will you!" Stedtman was heard again to shout; and again Hennig blurted forth that "Hell!" In a rush, a stormy chaos, they flung open the door, hurled themselves into the room; while the servant, helpless and frightened, followed. Stedtman had a hand upon Hennig's collar and was striving to hold him back; the other was like a beast in his grasp, struggling, snarling, leaping at the leash, almost foaming to get at his victim. Wild-eyed, with veins distended, hair and clothing in disarray from the struggle, Joe Hennig broke from the other's grasp and flung himself into the room, across to where Gilchrist stood; here, the picture of vengeful wrath, he confronted him.

"You—Gilchrist!" shouted Hennig. "Where've you got my wife?"

CHAPTER XIV.

Daniel Turns the Other Cheek.

As Joe Hennig, furious almost to the point of insanity, confronted Gilchrist, a hideous silence filled the room. "Where've you got my wife?" he demanded, and in the demand lay all of accusation. The words struck like a blow; the onlookers, with eyes riveted to the faces of Hennig and Gilchrist, waited the answer.

It came, without a shadow of anger. "Why, Hennig!" Daniel responded, with only kindly surprise in his voice or face, "I haven't got your wife!" It was the tone of the physician soothing a man in delirium.

Joe ground his teeth, his fists barely restrained themselves. "The hell you haven't!" he shouted.

Gilchrist turned to Clare. "You had better go," he said to her, since her husband failed of the presence of mind and wisdom to say it.

But Jerry broke in. "No!" he shouted. "I want her to stay!" He had seized upon the situation for his own innings, and he was not to be cheated of them. He turned to the servant. "All right!" he said, motioning to the man to go; he obeyed. "Now," Jerry continued, turning to Stedtman, "what's all this about?"

The ferret disclaimed any share in this outrageous disturbance in his employer's house. "You can search me!" he declared. "Umanski stuck to us all the way home," he went on explaining. "When he left, I went

in to have a little talk with Joe—alone—see?" he added with a significant wink at Jerry, in reminder of their appointment for a private interview later in the evening. "We was goin' to talk—business. But when we got to our room, where we're stoppin', there was a telegram for Joe, and he read it, and——"

Joe broke in: "And I came here to ask Gilchrist: where's my wife?" he shouted again. Plainly, the telegram had been the cause of this outburst.

"Your wife told me she was going to her sister's," Daniel said quietly, meeting Hennig's stare squarely. Honesty rang in his voice, shone in the clear gaze of his gray eyes.

"She ain't never been near her sister!" shouted the infuriated man. "And you know it! I just got this from her sister! Read it!" As he spoke, he held out a crumpled yellow telegram toward Daniel; but Jerry intercepted, snatching it.

He read it aloud:

> Pearl ain't here. We ain't seen her. Ain't she home?

Thus ran the clumsy but sufficient dispatch.

To Daniel, the solution seemed obvious enough. "But maybe she is at home—why not?" he asked.

Joe snarled like an animal. "You know she ain't! And what if she is—*now?* I don't want your leavings!"

For a moment Daniel Gilchrist held silence, white and tense, reviewing the situatiuon. He longed to be fully frank, to thrash out the matter as man to man.

But, because of the mesh that circumstances had woven he could not. There was Clare to consider. Clare, with her all at stake; Clare, with her struggle, her blunder, her bitter dregs—all the miserable error of her marriage which the last half-hour had revealed to him, as in the sudden flinging open of a hitherto sealed book. He spoke again, quietly, and with reserve:

"Why do you say that, Hennig?" was all he asked.

"Why do I say it? Ain't I seen you down town with her? Ain't I found you with her when I came home unexpected? I knew you was stuck on her, and I warned you to stay away—didn't I?"

"You were mistaken," Daniel replied with firm lips, still holding the blood-shot eyes with his own clear, steady ones.

But the man paid no heed to Gilchrist's clear-cut denial. He raged on. "Didn't I warn you?" he repeated, and now he raised a threatening fist.

"Yes." Daniel's calm firmness never wavered.

"And you came again—didn't you?"

"Yes." There was no hesitation in Daniel's honest reply; he told the truth with his eyes still upon Hennig's, and he added no explanation.

With one of his ugliest sneers Jerry turned to his wife. " 'Every man but one'!" he cried, flinging back her own words in her face with bitter mockery.

Daniel paused, then spoke at greater length. He addressed Joe and Joe only:

"I went first on your account, Hennig," he said. "Because they told me you were in debt. And they told me why. I 'came again,' as you say, because your

wife asked me to. This disappearance looks queer, I admit, but people *do* get lost, or hurt, and taken to hospitals, and aren't identified."

As he went on speaking, his manner was so convincing in its calm earnestness—his friendly sincerity was so patent—that even the mad jealousy of Joe Hennig yielded a trifle. His rage wavered. "You think she might——" he began, showing doubtful hope.

"I think your wife's all right, Joe!" Daniel assured him. "I don't think you ought to accuse her publicly until you're sure she's not."

Miserable with his doubts, his helplessness, the man appealed to Gilchrist: "How'm I gonna be sure?" he demanded.

"Suppose we ask the police to look for her?" suggested Gilchrist.

But at this Jerry broke in. If Joe gave way to Gilchrist, his innings were lost! He would be cheated of his little game. Besides, he had reasons of his own for not wishing the police called in. Too much investigation might prove unpleasant for Jerry Goodkind. He turned sharply upon the two as the police were mentioned.

"What's the use of starting a hulla-ba-loo?" he exclaimed. "You don't want the woman accused publicly, but you're willing to spread the news so this man'll be ashamed to go back home!" He flung this charge insolently at Daniel. "We all know the facts in the case," he added, with a face of feigned disgust, addressing the group, "and the less said about it now, the better." He turned to Joe. "You've found her

out. Let her go—and forget it!"

But the answer came, not from Joe, not from Daniel, but from Clare. During all this storm she had stood motionless, with eyes that followed ceaselessly, passing from face to face, searching, testing. It was as though she were an unseen judge, listening speechless to the testimony; weighing it. Her eyes seemed to probe the very depths of the human souls before her; if these did not lay themselves bare, those eyes were tearing aside their veils.

And now she stepped forward deliberately, and spoke in a low but clear voice that cut through the clamor of quarreling men like a knife. It brought dead silence. Every man turned toward her where she stood, slender and cold, the tall stem erect now——

"I don't think he ought to forget it," Clare said.

Jerry thrust his hands into his pockets and swaggered toward her, with a face of mock astonishment. "No?" he inquired with crude irony.

"No," she replied carefully, as if weighing her words. "I don't think he ought to drop it now—until we all know the truth."

Daniel nodded approvingly. "Right!" he cried.

Joe's unhappy, doubting, distraught eyes turned, first to Clare, then to Daniel, as pathetic as those of a lost dog. Perhaps these people, wiser in the ways of the world than he was, could be of service to him in his perplexity.

"Sure!" he cried. "I want to know the truth! I got to! I been crazy about that woman," he added, addressing Clare as though he felt some sympathy in her,

some woman's understanding, that the men could not offer. "I always was, and I never got over it yet. Maybe that's a good idea—the police. I *got* to know the truth!"

Jerry was losing. The tide was swaying from him. Not only would he fail of his coveted triumph over Gilchrist, if his enemy's suggestion of police aid were followed up; but he might find himself in very hot water indeed to have Pearl Hennig found in New York, and he set his jaw for fight.

"All right!" he cried. "Have it, then! Stedtman—where were you yesterday?"

"At the mines," came the prompt reply.

"What part of the mines?" Jerry pursued in courtroom fashion.

"All over."

"Did you see Gilchrist?"

"No."

With each one of the ferret's replies, Jerry's face relaxed a trifle more. Each reply was one more jerk of the net in which he proposed to entangle Gilchrist—it was tightening, tightening with every moment. His questions, Stedtman's answers, dovetailed like a previously worked-out plot, all leading toward a pre-arranged climax. Every person present in that still room followed them as though following a gripping drama in which the man who stood there as central figure was doomed to inevitable destruction, and they were watching its merciless advance.

Gilchrist stood among them and yet aloof. The tallest man present, he was the taller by virtue of his fine

erectness, the set of his broad, lean shoulders, the proud carriage of his finely modelled head. He had grown very pale as the dire moments sped; a look of acute anxiety had come into his eyes as he sought Clare's, and found there a rapidly growing coldness.

Jerry, revelling in his legal rôle, went on:

"When *did* you see Gilchrist last?"

Stedtman replied carefully, giving thought to the matter. "I seen him—let's see—Wen—no, Thursday. Yes, it was Thursday I seen him last."

"Where?"

"In Black River."

"*Alone?*"

As Jerry brought forth the single, significant word, with a long-drawn deliberateness, he leaned toward his victim, Gilchrist, peering vilely into his face, as though seeking there to find the answer he wanted. His question, however, was addressed to Stedtman, and it was Stedtman who replied. As his answer came, one could feel every breath in the room held in suspense; the instant's pause seemed an eternity to Daniel as he awaited the word.

"No," answered Stedtman.

Jerry fell back. Already he had triumphed; the mere detail of the name was incidental. With a leer of victory he put his final question carelessly, casting a gleeful look at Clare over his shoulder.

"With whom did you see him?"

"With Mrs. Hennig."

Not for an instant, during the examination, had Daniel's eyes left those of Clare. From anxiety his

look had passed to pain, as he saw her sympathy departing from him; and now his face was tortured. For a moment his eyes pleaded with hers: "Believe me, believe me!" his voice seemed to cry. But they met only an icy stare. It needed but one glance to show him that he stood convicted in her mind. To Clare, he had completely fallen; he was no longer that "one man"; he was unclean, unfaithful, merely one of the many who went to make up a foul world.

"With Mrs. Hennig," Stedtman had said, and silence had followed the name. Joe Hennig, who had clutched at the hope held out by Gilchrist, that his wife might be "all right," was stunned for a moment as he found that hope utterly dashed; then, all his insane fury rallying, he had turned upon Gilchrist like a madman.

"I knew it!" he shouted with a fist close to the other's face. "I'm gonna kill you!"

"No, you're not," Jerry cut in, masterful and determined. "You're going to keep quiet. But you wanted the truth, and you've got it. I've known it all along." He swung about, facing his wife; he folded his arms in a posture of triumph, gazing down at her.

"Now," he demanded, "do you think I was lying?"

She did not look at him. Her eyes were upon the floor. The suffering in her face was as deep as in that of the man whom she found condemned. For the moment she struggled not to acknowledge his fault.

"I—oh, I don't know!" she murmured miserably. "I don't understand!"

"Oh, yes you do!" sneered her husband. "Only you won't admit it!"

Wearily, with aching body and aching soul, Clare responded. "Yes. I suppose that's it." She started toward the door. Only to be away from it all! Only to be by herself, to face her unhappiness alone!

But Daniel's voice stopped her. "Clare!" he cried. He started, with a sudden stride, to follow her—halted ——

She paused—without turning, however. Her hand was on the knob.

"I don't care what anyone believes but you!" she heard him saying. His voice was controlled, but through it vibrated such an intensity of suppressed passion as she had never heard in it before.

She turned then, her hand still on the knob, but facing him for a moment. "I'll believe you, Dan, if you'll only explain," she said. There was pleading in her tone; as though she longed to see him cleared, clung to any chance that he might be, and yet hoped only against hope.

"I—Clare, I——" With another stride he had reached her, his hand was out toward her, another instant and it would have clasped her own in the appeal of old friendship. But with a swift movement Jerry was between them; he swung toward Daniel, aggressively facing him, his back to Clare.

"I forbid you to speak to my wife!" Jerry shouted.

Clare, indignant at the prohibition, came forward. Her head was up now, pride flung it high, a flush of anger burned its way through her pallor. "Go on, Dan!" she cried. Jerry had taken the worst way he could have thought of to turn her sympathy in his fa-

vor. At the instant when she said, "Go on, Dan!" Gilchrist felt himself almost reinstated. Hope surged into his eyes. As he met hers now, his own pleaded for her understanding as hers had pleaded for the truth.

"I——" he was beginning again. But again Jerry broke in:

"I forbid you to speak to my wife!"

Gilchrist's endurance was at an end. Teeth set, he swung about on his heel, turning full upon his persecutor. "If I hadn't anybody to think about but *you*——!" he ground out, his face close to the other's. At that instant he was the martyr no longer; he was the man, enraged, ready to do battle. His powerful frame, his trained muscles were a threat in themselves. One saw the curl of the strained biceps, writhing for their prey, leashed, eager to spring . . . . The two stared into each other's eyes, fighters ready for the moment . . . . Suddenly Jerry lifted his open hand, and struck Daniel across the mouth.

Clare saw Gilchrist's hand go up to retaliate. The motion was that of steel springing. Its swiftness, its power, its sureness were terrific in their import. She knew well enough that her husband, at any time, was no match for the former athlete, always firm and fit from his temperate living. Tonight he was impotent before Dan, flabby from heavy drinking, still more intoxicated by his own rage. She watched, her eyes flashing back and forth between the two; the blow, the steely spring of Gilchrist's muscles . . . . and then—

Gilchrist's hands fell at his sides, he opened them

limply. He lowered his head. His eyes dropped to the floor.

Speechless with amazement, Clare stared at him. What could it mean? He had received an insult from her husband; his one defense lay in the primitive answer of blow for blow. And here he was, renouncing that defense, meeting the insult with dumb acceptance

——

"Dan!" she cried, gathering her forces. "Dan! You're not going to take *that?*"

Still he stood with limp muscles, his head bowed. He did not return her look.

"I have nothing to say," he replied.

She panted. "I didn't think you were a coward! You—a coward!" Her hand went to her breast impulsively as though to crush down its heaving. "You see, I was wrong about everything!"

For a moment she still stared at him, as though demanding some explanation of this impossible fact; but fact it was. Gilchrist stood dumb, refusing to defend himself. "I thought——" But she said no more. With a sweeping movement she was at the door, opened it for herself, and, the sable scarf in her hand, she was gone. The door swung shut behind her and the men were alone.

There was a silence. Then Joe Hennig, emboldened by the scene just enacted, and certain now of Gilchrist's cowardice, broke from Stedtman's grasp. He made a rush at his enemy and was no longer held back.

"So—you'll play around *my* wife, will you?" he shrieked. Daniel raised his eyes and looked him full in

the face. But not a movement did he make to retaliate.

"You will . . . . will you? . . . . Take that!" As he said it, Joe struck out, no longer restrained by either fear or doubt; he struck crudely, fiercely, like the street brawler.

But the blow did not reach its destination. With one swift, dexterous movement Daniel had the wrist in his firm grasp. With another, he hurled the man to the floor. His movements were doubly powerful in that they were controlled; whereas both his enemies had struck in anger, Daniel was completely master of himself now, since that one moment when, facing Jerry, he had almost lost self-mastery. There was no spirit of retaliation now behind his quick act; merely a skillful self-defense.

He had averted the attack; that was all he wished. He did not interfere now as Hennig struggled to his feet. "I hope I didn't hurt you, Joe," he said quietly. "I didn't want to."

Stedtman stared, his glance traveling in amazement and incredulity from Daniel to Jerry, and back again. "My God!" he muttered.

So surprising had been Gilchrist's swift checking of Hennig's blow, his prompt hurling of that enemy to the floor, and his kindly solicitousness, that Hennig was taken completely aback. A blow in return would have spoken his language. He would have known the retort to *that*. But now he fell back muttering, angry but disarmed.

"Don't worry! I'll get you!" he mumbled. "It may

"She belongs to me, now."

be a long time, but I'll get you!" He was entirely unharmed, but he had learned the feeling of those trained muscles of Gilchrist's, and he was willing just now to defer further argument with fists. He backed out of the room.

Daniel turned to Stedtman and spoke with great kindness. "Take him home, Stedtman," he said. Still he maintained the attitude of a beneficent physician who deals with a patient in delirium.

Stedtman looked doubtfully at Jerry, not knowing what course to pursue. His host jerked his head toward the door.

"All right," Stedtman said. "Goodnight, Mr. Jerry. "Tell your father we'll be around——" Suddenly he caught Gilchrist's eye. It was regarding him with clear, penetrating gaze. He stumbled. "We—we—" he muttered, "in—in—the morning." He departed quickly. Daniel's eye had the knack of making a man wonder uncomfortably what it was seeing in him.

Stedtman closed the door behind him. And now the other two, by themselves at last, faced each other eye to eye.

Perhaps that same eye which had made Stedtman uncomfortable had some similar effect upon young Goodkind. Nervously he went to the table and poured himself a drink. Then, sullenly, he began to bluster.

"Well, you've made a nice mess of it!" he cried, tilting his glass and setting it down. "Why can't you keep your nose out of other people's business? Why did you have to date my leaving Black River?"

Daniel's arms were folded, he stood calmly regarding

the other in a way that caused Jerry's own eyes to shift.

"Why did you have to get mixed up with Pearl Hennig?" he demanded.

Jerry shrugged, swaggered a bit, but still avoided that calm, cold scrutiny.

"I can take what I want out of life!" Jerry blustered.

"You can," Daniel responded. "God says, 'Here is the world. Take what you want . . . . AND PAY FOR IT'!"

Daniel had risen to an almost mystic height; from up there he seemed gazing down upon the swaggering, boasting, stumbling, embarrassed, angry Jerry. As his voice, his emotion mounted slowly to the last words, they rang through the room in a tone that might have awed a man less arrogant than Jerry Goodkind; perhaps they perturbed even him a trifle, for there was an almost frightened petulance in his retort:

"Rubbish!" He poured out more liquor, drank again. "Save your preaching for those that like it!" He put down the glass noisily and came forward toward the other, now meeting his eyes. "And keep away from my wife!" As his own imagined wrongs returned to his mind his anger flared hot again, he faced Gilchrist defiantly.

"Why?" Daniel asked calmly, his gaze never wavering.

"Because you're in love with her! Aren't you?"

"Yes." Still the voice was calm, there was no hesitation in the honest reply.

Jerry came closer, stared, red-eyed, into the other's face. "Well, you've a hell of a nerve to preach to me about Hennig's wife while you're making a play for mine!"

"I'm not making a play for yours."

"No?" sneered Jerry. "Indeed? You expect me to believe that when you admit . . . . Why did you pull that hero stuff? Why did you keep your mouth shut when I lost my temper?" he suddenly demanded. Perhaps nothing that Daniel had said or done had so enraged Jerry Goodkind as the fact that he had held himself persistently in leash, had refused to return insult for insult. "Why," he cried furiously now, *"did you turn the other cheek?"*

Daniel shook his head sadly. "You wouldn't understand, Jerry," he said.

"Wouldn't I? Well, *you* understand that I've forbidden you to speak to her, and that goes. If you come here again, I'll have the servants throw you out, and I'll tell my father why."

A step at the door caused them both to look up.

"Here's your father now," Gilchrist quietly observed.

Jerry glanced around, saw his father entering. He came nearer to Daniel, and lowered his voice, lest he be overheard.

"And that's not all I'll do!" he said in savage threat. "Not by a damned sight!"

Then, wheeling on his heel, he stumbled from the room.

CHAPTER XV.

"Fool!"

Goodkind paused in the doorway. He had not caught Jerry's words, but he had noted their tone, and the look that went with them. He could not have failed to gather their general import of hatred and ill-will. His shrewd, world-trained eyes passed back and forth between Gilchrist and his son; he watched the latter stumbling from the room in collision with a chair—which collision was brought about chiefly by the blindness of anger, but superinduced, perhaps, by the last drink. Then he turned to Gilchrist: saw him grave, poised, clear-eyed; tense and white with strain, but completely master of himself, none the less. Goodkind's eyelids drew together to a sagacious slit; a slit that said, "We are sizing up the situation."

"Smoke?" he inquired casually, walking forward after a pause and reaching toward his humidor.

"Thanks," Daniel returned with equal casualness, taking a cigar.

Goodkind helped himself to one. Still casual and deliberate, he observed:

"Jerry don't like you much, does he?"

"Not much," Daniel replied.

For a flashing instant Goodkind had searched Daniel's eyes as the other spoke; but now he was once more concerned with his cigar. He lighted it deliberately, with lazy puffs, his face illumined by the glow of the

match; drew a long whiff; then:

"Well . . . . how are things in Black River?"

"I think we've got everything settled," Daniel told him, brightening.

"Fine! Benfield'll be up in a minute, and we'll hear the conditions!" The older man drew up his favorite easy chair, and settled himself in it with a long, luxurious breath of relaxation.

"Somehow, I knew you'd do it!" he went on, nodding his satisfaction. "Jerry says you're a philanthropist, but I knew he was wrong!" He pursed his lips, smiled approvingly at the other.

"Thanks," returned Daniel. He added no comment; just what meaning lay behind that one word would have been hard to guess.

"If you've really settled this strike—our way——" Goodkind leaned forward in his chair to give emphasis to what he was about to say. It was a most important statement. He paused before making it, to add to its impressiveness; then, bringing a palm down upon a knee, he said:

"If you do—your salary from today is thirty thousand a year!"

If George Goodkind expected any show of enthusiasm from the young man, he was disappointed. Still that cool, unfathomable tone replied:

"Thanks—again."

"I'm dog-sick of rowing with labor," Goodkind went on. "It's such utter damned waste! . . . . *Excuse* me!"

"I agree with you!" Daniel cried. His voice was

hearty now; his enthusiasm had ignited at last.

Goodkind warmed to the subject. "I'd hate to figure what walkouts have cost this country!" he went on.

"Yes. I often wonder why it wouldn't be cheaper to keep the men contented." Daniel had returned to his quiet manner.

But Goodkind was too much absorbed in his own ideas and arguments to give heed. "How're you going to do it?" he demanded. "Don't forget there are as many people paid for stirring up strikes as for crushing 'em! Paid well, too! What the laboring man *needs* is a real interest in his job!"

Daniel paused before answering; he was still standing, and now he stepped toward Goodkind, looking earnestly into the other's shrewd face.

"Why don't you give it to him?" he asked at length.

The older man looked up sharply, inquisitively. Just what did the chap mean? he wondered. Was he driving at something——?

"How?" he asked a trifle tartly. "By doubling his wages? The more most of 'em get the less they want to do for it! You know that!"

"Yes."

"They've got a notion that you get rich by riding around in a limousine!"

"Don't you?" Daniel asked.

"Not often!" cried Goodkind. "Not unless you *think* while you ride—or your father thought for you!" he added with sharp significance. "Even then," he added succinctly, "money doesn't stay long in bad company! To hear those fellows, you'd think there *wasn't* any

work, except what's done with a pick!" He uttered an indignant "Hmph!" and concluded with asperity: "The man that really produces is the man with the idea!"

"The man that produces most," corrected Daniel.

"Yes." Goodkind accepted the correction. "And he ought to *get* most," he added.

"He does!" Daniel still stood before him, earnestly but quietly replying to his heated arguments, gazing, friendly but grave, into his face.

"He always will, too!" snapped Goodkind. "Show me a big man and I'll show you somebody who's done a big job! It's the little man with no capacity and no chin that cries about a conspiracy to keep him from being president!"

"There've got to be little men, too, Mr. Goodkind," Daniel said.

Goodkind was not to be checked. "And they've got to be satisfied with little rewards!" he retorted. "We can't all have the same bank-roll any more than we can all have the same health! That's where the unions go wrong. When you tell a man he's going to have the same reward, whatever he does—not because he's got ability, but because he's got a union card—down goes the standard, out goes incentive!"

As he talked, Goodkind had grown more and more heated; he rose now, puffing angrily on his cigar, and fell to pacing the floor. His hands were thrust into his pockets; his cigar wiggled violently between his teeth. Now and then he paused to snatch a hand from a pocket and knock off his ash; then once more striding, smoking, he went on:

"And when the standard and the incentive are gone, to hell goes the whole social structure!"

"Right!" assented Daniel, heartily.

"That's why I'm fighting the unions! Not because I want to starve the man who works, but because I want to fire the man who doesn't! . . . . *And* reward the man who does! I want to give every man a good reason for doing his best. You can talk equality and democracy all you like, Dan." He paused, bringing up face to face with the other, tapping his arm with emphasis as he frowned into his face. "But the minute the average man isn't afraid of being fired he isn't afraid of being worthless! The minute you take away incentive—the chance to get *this*—that minute you reduce the world to a common level of common indifference and common futility!"

"Right!" again assented Daniel heartily.

Goodkind paused, drawing breath and puffing with more deliberation. He had spent his arguments and his heat, and he felt relieved. "Have another cigar!" he offered, reaching again for the humidor.

But Daniel shook his head, indicating the one which he had taken some time ago and which he was only now lighting. He had held it absently all these minutes, too much absorbed in listening to Goodkind's declamation to be aware of it in his hand.

The older man had finished his, and he now threw its stump into an ash-tray and looked about impatiently. He was master of the art of conserving time. He wanted to get on with business, and at once; "Where the hell's——" he began, but the words were taken out

of his mouth by the entrance of the other member of the conference.

"Oh! There you are, Benfield!" he cried. "Come on in. Gilchrist has settled the strike!"

"Good!" bellowed Benfield's bull-like voice. "That's what we want!" he roared affably.

Daniel reached into a pocket and drew forth a long folded paper. He turned to Goodkind, as president, and handed it to him.

"There are the terms," he said.

Goodkind took the paper with a snort of satisfaction, and seated himself once more in his favorite chair, drawing up toward the softly-shaded lamp. He unfolded it.

"They may seem a little radical," Daniel went on, "but I think I can show you they'll save money in the end!" He showed neither eagerness nor apology; whatever reaction he looked for, he gave no hint of anxiety. He spoke with complete self-possession.

Goodkind was thoroughly convinced that young Gilchrist "saw things the right way." He had always had a weakness for Daniel, in spite of what he deemed that young man's follies and errors. He was ever ready to think the best of him; and when Jerry spitefully declared him to be "a bug," his father was hot in his defense. Of late, since he had overlooked Daniel's foolishness in giving away such large sums of money, and had become convinced that the son of his old friend was turning into an able business man, he was blind to any possibility on Gilchrist's part of thinking—and acting—along strange lines.

Now, as Daniel offered him the paper containing the terms of agreement, Goodkind received it with the utmost satisfaction and relief. He hadn't opened it; he didn't need to, to be convinced that Dan had squared everything in the cleverest and the most satisfactory way. "They'll save money in the end," Daniel was saying. Right! That was the idea! The fellow had a good head on him! He wasn't going to disgrace that astute old man of business, the elder Gilchrist, after all!

"That's the idea!" Goodkind responded, beginning deliberately to open the paper. It was in his hands at last; with it there, he felt confident and cocky. He turned to Benfield, wagging his head smugly, pursing his lips in satisfaction.

"I told you I knew my man!" he reminded that skeptic. "The Lord knows he's full of theories, but sometimes they——"

He broke off. The paper was open now, and, as he spoke, his eye fell upon a surprising line. He frowned.

"What's that?" inquired Benfield.

Goodkind's frown deepened, he bent intently above the paper. He was reading, half aloud, half to himself; words dropped as he skimmed over the page:

"'Hereby agreed' . . . . the men are to be represented . . . . on the board of directors' . . . . "

"No!!" bellowed Benfield. His exclamation came lunging across the room, hurling itself at Daniel. The two directors started at one another.

Goodkind's eyes again turned to the paper. He continued, reading bits as he went:

"Yes! And look here! 'All disputes . . . . referred

. . . . to a committee of arbitration . . . . '."

"The man's gone crazy!" roared Benfield.

Daniel Gilchrist had not yet spoken since he had handed the president the paper. His air, although courteous to a degree, had suggested "take it or leave it;" now he broke in, however, seeking to explain:

"When you're through——" he began, but the others did not hear him. Goodkind was poring more and more intently over the incendiary paper; Benfield listening with all attention, eyes bulging toward the reader, fingers working with suppressed rage.

Goodkind read:

" 'One-half of all profits, over and above a fair dividend, to be divided pro rata, according to wage and length of service'." He rose from his chair as though his excitement hurled him, like a bomb. "Why——" he began. "Why——" Words failed him. He stood there, muttering, groping for speech, red, with outstanding veins. "What—what is this?" he brought out at length. He turned upon Daniel with a terrible look, but could say no more. It was all beyond utterance.

"Jerry told you what it is!" shouted Benfield, taking the reply away from Daniel. "He told you! It's surrender, that's what it is!"

"No! No!" Daniel broke in now. He faced the two enraged elder men. "It's justice!" he cried, his head up, his shoulders braced for conflict. His clear eyes flashed fire. "Justice, and it's got to be!"

"It's nothing!" Goodkind found words at last. "It's a scrap of paper until I sign it, and I wouldn't sign it if

I had to shut up every mine in West Virginia! Why should I? We've got 'em licked!"

"If you'll only let me explain——" Daniel protested, but Goodkind, having found words, could not stop.

"Explain *what?*" he demanded, beating the table with his fist. "What is there to explain? They're licked, I tell you! They sent a delegation up here, and we've won over the delegation! They're licked already——"

Daniel faced him calmly, but his eyes pierced holes in Goodkind's thoughts.

"You mean you've bought the delegation," Daniel coolly retorted.

"Who said so?" sputtered the other.

"Jerry," was the quick response. "Not ten minutes ago he referred to Stedtman as the company detective. We both know Hennig's for sale. Buy him, and I'll go back and tell them he's bought, and prove it!"

The two older men, their hardly-used arteries strained to a high pitch through astounded wrath, stared sullenly at young Gilchrist. They had no denial to make. He had sped his arrow straight to the bull's-eye. For seconds they stood thus, while he met their gaze not without nervous tension, his hands gripped and damp; but with perfect self-command. At length, sullenly, Benfield blustered:

"But you're working for us!" That was the game as he knew it; a man worked for one side, or the other, according to which employed him; abstract right and wrong were unknown issues.

Daniel tried to reply. "I'm working for——" he

said, but got no farther. Goodkind interrupted.

"Wait a minute, Benfield!" he said, with a sudden reining of his anger. Perhaps certain warnings uttered by the family physician of late prompted in part his attempt at concilation; and certainly his affection for Daniel played its part. "We've all lost our heads!" he declared now, shaking off his own display of temper. "Daniel and I have just been over all this, and he admitted that I was right!" He nodded to the others, as though to draw them into a ring of better understanding. Surely, the appearance of the paper must be deceiving! Daniel couldn't for a minute have thought of arranging such terms as seemed to be here set forth! Yes, he must have a chance to explain.

"Didn't you, Daniel?" he inquired, his voice milder, the red receding from his temples. "Go ahead—what's that you were going to say? You remember, you admitted I was right!"

"Right as far as you went," Daniel said. "But you only went part of the way! You have a right to a profit on your idea, and your investment, and the labor you put back of it! The public has a right to coal, and transportation, and all it needs and pays for! But, above everything else, the workman who works honestly has a right to something more than the barest kind of a bare living . . . . and it can all be done if you don't sink everybody's rights to accumulate a fortune you don't need and can't use! . . . All the argument on earth can't make you *all* right so long as there's a Umanski in the world!"

Certain phrases rang unpleasantly familiar in Ben-

field's ears, like the bars of a disliked tune heard again. "Sink everybody's rights" . . . . "A fortune you don't need and can't use" . . . . Phrases he had heard before. Yes, in the Christmas sermon. Once again he felt himself in the church on that Christmas morning, saw the pointing finger of the young clergyman. the flash of his eye, heard the ring of his voice as he leaned forward in the pulpit, and made his charge . . . .

An oath growled under Benfield's breath, but he felt strangely unable to take up the argument. Goodkind relieved him.

"If these people succeed there's no limit to what they will do!" he exclaimed.

"If they fail there's no limit to what you'll do!" Gilchrist retorted crisply.

Goodkind snorted. "There's no good transferring control from the intelligent few to the ignorant mob!"

Daniel showed no hesitation. "There's no good," he came back on the instant, "in anything, so long as we fight each other like beasts instead of helping each other like brothers! There's no hope anywhere except in The Great Teacher, and the understanding that what He taught was not only good morals, but good sense and good business!"

Benfield had by this time regained his powers of speech. It was always terse speech, and always to the point. A comment on his part frequently consisted of an oath and nothing more; he was being wordy for him, when he hissed between set teeth:

"Highfalutin' nonsense!"

Goodkind turned to him. The other's face seemed

swollen from rage; even the great bull neck seemed puffing out above the tight collar that Benfield wore. The sight of the other's anger had the effect of moderating Goodkind's; his impulse was to defend his young friend, to exonerate him in Benfield's eyes. He knew that old resentment burned hot in the latter's memory, against the preacher who, almost a year before, had attempted to strip and flay him before a congregation; he realized that Daniel needed all his friendship against such a rancor.

"Daniel doesn't realize what he's costing us!" he said to the other director in a mollifying tone.

But before Benfield could retort, Daniel came forward with a quick, business-like question.

"What am I 'costing you'?" he asked pointedly.

"Millions!" Goodkind groaned.

"Oh, is that all!" was the astounding retort from the young man. Goodkind's eyebrows went up in blank astonishment; Benfield, his lips twitching with the words he could not utter, spluttered violently:

"All?"

Daniel coolly continued, looking from one to the other as he spoke with unflinching eye. As a business man, in the employ of the Black River Mining company, he strangely resembled that young clergyman, that spiritual teacher, who had stood in the Nativity's pulpit eleven months before and had set forth, with tongue of fire, the word of Christ. He had been robed and surpliced then, in the garb of the priest; now he wore the business man's conventional suit, was holding a cigar and conferring with mine directors in a busi-

ness man's library-office. But although the outward appearances were so different, he was the same man; a change of environment, of occupation, had wrought no change of heart. Here he stood, again preaching Christ in spirit, though his pulpit now was a table littered with ledgers and commercial papers; his robe a black suit. Had you called his attention to this, Daniel would have asked you in return,

"Does Christ move among us only within church walls? Is Christianity confined to the reciting of collects and the singing of hymns?"

He went on: "Am I costing you one cigar? Am I costing you one blanket from your warm beds, or one stick of furniture from your comfortable homes, or anything else you'll ever miss? I'm taking nothing from you, and I'm giving thousands of men like you a chance to live!"

It was too much for even Goodkind, with all his prejudice in Daniel's favor. He had believed that the young man had "come to his senses at last;" he had given him every possible chance to demonstrate those senses; he had stood by him when others were against him, and had striven to put a favorable interpretation upon every move he made. But the end had come. Gilchrist was becoming personally insulting, as well as mad; he was offering open affront. There was no longer any excusing him, any enduring him.

"You're costing yourself your last chance of success!" he cried, his long, determined upper lip shutting grimly upon the lower in a tight, hard line. Glaring, he fronted the younger man; Daniel, meeting that cold,

furious eye knew that the end had come.

For an instant he held tight silence, afraid to trust himself to speak. His own anger was boiling up, ready to overflow; but he kept it down. Still master of himself, although unable to control a catch in his voice, he said:

"I don't want your kind of success! I'm through! I give you back your job, as I gave you back your church, and I give you twenty-four hours to sign that paper!"

Goodkind released his gripped lips to say:

"If I do, you're finished!"

"I am when you've signed!" was Gilchrist's response. As he spoke, he turned toward the door.

Goodkind whirled about, flung after him his one final opportunity. Let the fellow take it if he chose—it was there, to pick up if he would stoop—or to leave.

"If you walk out of that door you're throwing away the chance of your life!" he shouted.

Daniel, his hand upon the knob, half turned as he replied:

"I'm keeping my soul!" He opened the door, was passing out——

"You Judas!" bellowed Benfield's voice, pursuing him.

"You damned fool!" It was Goodkind's.

Daniel's glance back toward them held nothing of anger, but it was unflinchingly firm.

"Goodnight," he said, and closed the door behind him. The last sound he heard was Goodkind's reiterated curse:

"Fool!"

CHAPTER XVI.

Overcoat Hall

From the moment when Daniel Gilchrist closed the door of George Goodkind's library behind him, the young man vanished from view. That is, from the view of that group in which Goodkind moved. The Gilliams, the Tices, Benfield and Mrs. Thornbury—all that busy, hungry, spendful, wasteful circle. They went on, whirling madly, dashing their wings against the scorching flame of wealth, as before; they gave their dinners and dances, they rushed away to house-parties and week-ends, they panted back to theaters and operas and bridges; and they forgot Daniel Gilchrist.

The Church of the Nativity saw him no more. The directors of the Black River mines saw him no more. In social life, in church connections, in business, he was no longer one of them. To most, his whereabouts were unknown. There were a few, however, who had "heard somebody say that somebody else had heard that he had been seen in New York;" and one there was, at least, who knew where.

Daniel Gilchrist was in New York. He still lived and moved and had his being under the same roof of blue sky shot by skyscrapers that housed these one-time friends of his. But his circle now consisted of a very different social group indeed. A group at sight of whom Dilly Gilliam would have turned her pretty

retroussée nose heavenward; her mother would have clucked to her to "come away," like a distracted and horrified hen; Mrs. Thornbury would have shrugged her famous shoulder-blades quite through her diaphanous evening gown; and Benfield would have bellowed his disgust. . . . A little lame street waif swinging between crutches . . . A red-nosed, dirty-handed, unshaven person extracted from the gutter. . . . A washwoman with one eye always blackened by the chastisement of a highly disciplinary husband, so that her friends had the habit of betting on "which eye it'd be tomorrow" . . . . These, and others like unto them were Gilchrist's daily companions.

His headquarters—no longer the stately chancel of a wealth-laden church. No longer the comfortable and smart apartment of a well-to-do bachelor, or the office of an important business concern. Daniel's headquarters now lay in a strange place indeed. Down-town, in a district once respectably residential, but long ago given over to business of the most sordid sort, to slums and dirt, stood the old-time dwelling which he had chosen for his purpose. To those who frequented this establishment, it was known by the mystifying name of "Overcoat Hall."

The building was a red-brick, low-stoop, English-basement house. The one-time "front parlor" was the largest room, the one in which Daniel had established his odd combination of club, settlement-house, school, reading room and lecture hall. As a matter of fact, all the activities carried on there were more or less an excuse to draw in the frozen from the cold, the starved

to food, the weak from vice, the unhappy to friendship. Soul and body, Daniel warmed them, whoever they were that chose to enter.

The room boasted no expenditure, but it was inviting nevertheless. Somehow he had made it so. The decrepit white marble mantel and fireplace of old days still stood, but a modern and energetic radiator had taken its place in action. Two lofty windows revealed the top of an iron railing and a row of similar structures, fallen to decay, across the street. Not a cheering sight; but, to offset it, the long table in the center of the room bore a cosy reading lamp, a bowl of flowers, and many scattered papers and magazines. Brown linoleum covered the floor, brown denim curtains framed the windows. There were bookshelves and some deep, comfort-breeding chairs; a phonograph offered entertainment, and a motion-picture machine stood alluringly in one corner.

So much for entertainment. There was equipment for work as well. A large blackboard above the mantel-shelf, a history chart hanging against the wall, a geographical globe, some school books and chalk, erasers, and pointer, suggested the lesson hour.

Just after seven o'clock on a brisk October evening in 1920—almost a year since Gilchrist's rupture with the Black River mine directors—this "hall" looked uncommonly cheerful with its huge bowl of orange and maroon and purple chrysanthemums upon the table, its reading lamp glowing cosily through the long, comfortable room. A lesson in arithmetic had evidently been going on recently, for some simple calculations

stood forth, labored and scrawly, upon the blackboard; above them, in more experienced handwriting, stood the axiom, "Luck is Work." On a smaller blackboard had been chalked no school lessons, but a brief quotation:

> And so, to the end of history, hate shall breed hate, murder shall breed murder, until the gods create a race that can understand.

The room was occupied by a solitary member of the club—a gentleman known by the distinguished name of "Grubby." In spite of earnest efforts on the part of Daniel and his helpers, this gentleman still persisted in deserving, to some extent at least, the name. They had induced him to shave occasionally but only occasionally; a bath remained an event to him, and by no means a welcome event. "Hard to teach an old dog a new bath—especially after sixty," someone had commented; and Mary Margaret was wont to say:

"If you'd seen that Grubby when he first came here, you'd a thought all the soap powders and ammonias and sand-soaps in the grocery store wouldn't a cleaned him! And now look at him! Why, he's a regular *dude* compared to then!"

Grubby, slightly bearded and partially cleansed, then, was seated near the lamp with the latest copy of "The Pictorial Review" largely outspread before him. He was absorbed in its contents; so deeply absorbed indeed that he failed to hear the door creak as it was hesitantly opened by a stranger. He remained

buried in his magazine, quite as deeply intrigued as if it had been "The Police Gazette."

A shabby ne'er-do-well, a man of thirty or forty years, opened the door a doubtful crack and peered in. Reassured by the character of the room, he entered, and looked about him curiously. He was sure, at a glance, that this shabby, unshaven Grubby was a person of no authority; neither a "cop" nor a "boss"; so Mack dismissed anxiety on that score and entered boldly now.

He advanced to the radiator, warmed his hands, rubbing them with a luxurious thrill of warmth; he was scantly clad against the sharp air of late October. Relaxed at last in the heat of the spizzing radiator, he strolled over to the small blackboard which hung between the two front windows, where once the pompous gold-framed mirror of tradition had hung; studied the quotation enshrined there, spelling out the words with attentive effort. He passed on, inspecting the phonograph, the reading table, flowers, lamp, magazines; he arrived at the other blackboard, where the three words chalked on high arrested him:

Luck is work.

He read them, read them again; then, with a contemptuous sniff, he turned away. *That* bunk! commented Mack inwardly.

Having completed his circuit of the room, he drew up in front of the absorbed Grubby. Only a rustle of the leaf came from that source; Grubby was lost to the world. Impatient, Mack now addressed him:

"Hello . . . . you!"

Grubby put down his magazine with a clash of rattling paper. His round, red, scraggly-gray-bearded face stared forth.

"Is this Overcoat Hall?" Mack demanded.

"Yes." Plainly, Grubby wished to return to his pursuit of literature.

"I'm looking for Mr. Gilchrist."

"He ain't in, but he will be."

"Are you workin' here?"

"No."

"Is *anybody* workin' here?"

"Mary Margaret," Grubby replied.

Mack snorted. Nothing but a girl's name! "Who's she?" he demanded with contempt.

"A girl," Grubby replied. Not enlightening.

"What girl?"

"The girl that cleans." Grubby began to repent of his churlishness. He remembered something that Mr. Gilchrist had said about everyone being a host in his own club. "She's a lame girl," he explained, more affably, and laying down the periodical. "Her mother's the janitor. Have a seat," he added, motioning toward one of the kitchen chairs that were gathered at the table for readers. Grubby was beginning to warm to his own hospitality. "Somebody'll be along in a minute. Make yourself comf'table."

Having done his duty by a guest, he plunged once more into the inviting pages. Mack, thrown again upon his own resources, picked up one periodical after another, but Fortune did not smile upon his choice. He tasted "The Atlantic Monthly," turned from it with

a hopeless sigh; he dipped into "The Review of Reviews" and "The Scientific American." Not one of them seemed to contain a hair-raising detective tale or the report of the latest prize-fight; it was such hard sledding for Mack to spell his way through any piece of literature, that he felt abused if there was no thrill to be won at the end of the journey. He abandoned his attempts and tuned once more to Grubby for social amusement.

"What are you readin'?" he demanded.

"A piece about 'Better Babies'."

Mack laughed hoarsely. "Are you goin' into the baby business?"

"No," Grubby responded with literalness. "I was a hansom driver."

"*Handsome!*" roared Mack. Delighted with his own wit, he burst into uproarious laughter, clapping his knee at the thought of "handsome" as applied to that red face with its rotund nose and gray stubble.

"Ah . . . . hacks!" Grubby went on, reflectively. "I drove hacks— man and boy—forty years. Then taxis come in, and I went out!"

"What'd you do then?" inquired the sociable Mack.

"Took to drink."

"Yeh; then drink went out." Again Mack complimented his own wit by a roar of laughter.

"What's *your* job?" Grubby asked, recalling something else he had heard about feeling an interest in others, although he greatly preferred a good magazine to a tiresomely talkative down-and-outer. Grubby, albeit ex-hansom-driver and ex-tippler, was a man of

ideals.

"Well, I was in the movies," Mack rejoined, launching with pleasure upon the engaging topic of Mack. "That is, I was goin' to be, but the fellow that was goin' to put up the money, his mother didn't die, after all . . . . Before that, I sold bricks—a few weeks. I sold books, too. And life insurance. I never had any luck. Who wrote that, 'Luck is Work'?" he suddenly demended, his eyes flashing to the blackboard, then to Grubby. He asked it with an air of offense.

"Mr. Gilchrist," the other replied.

"Well, it isn't!" Mack declared. His offense was swollen now; staring at the words, he doubled a fist, as though he would like to beat them as they deserved for their lie.

"I've worked at *fifty* things, and look at me! I figure the world owes *me* a livin', and here I am, waitin' for a bite of grub and an overcoat!" He turned from the blackboard, looked sharply into Grubby's face as he drew nearer, lowered his voice:

"Is it true," he asked with a shifty wink, "that the boss'll give you an overcoat?"

"He will if he's got one," Grubby told him. He did not meet the whisper or the wink with like secrecy; he replied openly, as though the gift were a matter-of-course, and not to be angled for.

"That's what a fellow told me," Mack went on. "He said that's why they call this 'Overcoat Hall'."

"Yes. It is."

Again Mack gave Grubby what he considered the high sign. "I s'pose a hard-luck story's the proper

spiel?" he whispered.

"You don't get no chance for a spiel," Grubby answered frankly and aloud. "He don't ask you nothing. You just come, and help yourself, and talk things over —if you want to. Coffee and sandwiches every night —and suppers and sermons on Wednesdays."

At the mention of the last-named entertainment, Mack made a face of overweening scorn. "Preachin'!" he exclaimed. His eye was caught by a wall-pad calendar which announced the day as "Wednesday."

"Wednesdays—sermons!" he cried. "I'll be back Thursday!" He snatched his hat from the table. But Grubby interrupted his departure.

"Not regular preachin'!" he explained eagerly. "Just talks! Sometimes they's a picture show . . . . but the pictures is rotten! No shootin', or nothin! But you can always sneak a little snooze till you get to the hand-out!" he added confidentially.

Mack had halted his hat on its hurried way to his head, and now he sat listening with interest, although doubt knotted his brow. Just whether it would be advisable to wait, and try the method of "sneaking a little snooze" as advised, along with testing the hope of an overcoat; or whether it would be the part of wisdom to adhere to his intention of returning on Thursday, a day free from "preachin'," he was thoughtfully debating within himself. So engrossed were the two in their discussion that they did not hear the sound of crutches which were traveling briskly along the hall and entering the door. Nor did they glance up to see the little figure who paused in the doorway, contem-

plating them.

Mary Margaret didn't thump-thump any more when she walked. She had new and improved crutches, so that they trod as softly, she told you with delight, as "that little gray pussy-cat that I save the top-milk for." All kinds of nice things, indeed, happened to Mary Margaret as the months slid by; a little thing here, a big thing there. Mr. Gilchrist, the wonderful Mr. Gilchrist, was "fairy godmother, only how could he be a fairy godmother when he was a gentleman, and an awful gentlemanly one at that?" Now it was a better pair of crutches—he had discovered that she was improperly fitted, and a better pair would make it easier for her to get about. Next, fur-lined gloves—he had noticed how cold and stiff her hands were when she came in from the nipping wind. And a book that told you all about the stars—somehow Mary Margaret always managed to see the stars, even though the city shut them out from other people—and she was always wanting to know about them—their names, and how they spun around. And a bright ribbon for her hair, because she felt "all cheered up and warm inside if she had a scrap of red somewhere around her." This, that, the other—he was always thinking of her . . . . In return, she worshipped with a devotion hardly short of religion, and the days weren't long enough for her to serve him.

Mary Margaret was fifteen now, and pathetically pretty. Good food and affection had brightened her eyes and her cheeks, bringing out their loveliness. She was still a wisp of a creature, frail in the extreme,

often wearing that look of the little wraith who stands ready to slip over the borderland and escape from human bonds. But, despite physical suffering, happiness shone in her pinched little face.

Her appearance at this moment was somewhat remarkable. She wore a plain, clean little percale frock with a touch of the warm pink that she loved, and suitable for her many duties of housework. Above the trim, round collar her face showed touches of like pink in the pallor; caught from the nipping air outside; her eyes, big and dark, looked forth brightly from under the neatly brushed thatch of short dark hair. Her tiny body hung, strained and bent, between the crutches. But—strangely incongruous touch!—into this portrait of the neat, plain little cripple and houseworker, had been introduced a pair of soiled gold slippers that had once set off a ball gown. These slippers were evidently foremost in Mary Margaret's thoughts, for she glanced at them repeatedly as they swung into view between the crutches, and a gleam of satisfaction shot into her thin face at every glance.

Since nobody noticed her, she came silently into the room and set about attending to duties. The low marble shelf between the high front windows, once the base from which the haughty mirror had sprung, bore now a tray of cups and saucers. Mary Margaret swung her way over to the tray, and busied herself with setting it to rights. She heard the talk of the men going on:

"Don't this guy try to reform you?" Mack was inquiring, his thoughts running on Mr. Gilchrist and his

chances for an overcoat—also, what the cost, on a basis of spiritual payment, might be. Mack didn't intend to be "roped into" going to church, or listening to sermons, or "getting converted," all for the sake of an overcoat, much as he needed one!

"Naw!" Grubby replied. "The way he talks, you'd think you was as good as him. He says to me, the other night, he says, 'You're a good man yet, Grubby,' he says. 'You're strong and healthy,' he says, 'and if you learned to drive a taxi, all the best people in New York would be telephoning for your cab. I'll lend you the money,' he says; gee, he almost had me started!"

"What's the catch?" Mack inquired. Something for nothing was not in Mack's scheme of the universe; the ulterior motive must enter in. People didn't hand out a coat, and offer you a loan, for nothing; something shady must lurk in the offing.

Grubby looked thoughtful. He had sometimes wondered himself, to tell the truth. "I don't know," he responded slowly, profoundly, as though studying this strange psychological phenomenon.

"There must be graft in it somewhere," Mack asserted. He shut his lips tight and shook his head, to express the deepest and darkest suspicion.

"If you ask me," Grubby said, still pondering, "I think the poor gent's got a few nuts in his nose-bag. A little—bit—batty!" Grubby declared profoundly, with the air of a physician who is delivering his diagnosis of a serious case. "That's what *I* say!"

Mary Margaret, stirring softly among the cups and saucers, had followed every word of this discussion of

her worshipped hero, and now the faint pink had deepened to two scarlet spots of indignation upon her thin little cheeks. She whirled about—faced the men, flaming.

"And that's what you got no right to say, Grubby!" she cried.

The two jumped at the suddenness of the charge, looked up. Mack laughed as he saw the wisp of a creature hanging there upon her crutches, and delivering herself of this fierce rebuke. But Grubby looked uncomfortable.

"That's Mary Margaret," he explained to the newcomer in a whisper.

"He's been good to you, ain't he?" she went on indignantly.

Grubby grinned now. "That's why we think he's nutty," he returned. "What's he do it for?"

"'Cause he loves you," she answered solemnly.

"What for?" again inquired Grubby, more logical than spiritually-minded.

"God knows!" Limping along with one crutch, she had made her way down the room, carrying a cup and saucer in the free hand, and these she now set down upon the table with a *bang!* so forcible that they barely escaped being cracked. The act suggested that she might enjoy setting down Grubby with a like force.

She went about clearing a place at one end of the table, and making ready to serve a meal—talking, limping, busily arranging dishes.

"After seven o'clock now," she said with annoyance "and the meeting in half an hour, and he ain't had a

bite since morning!"

"Where *is* he?" Mack demanded. His curiosity about this "poor gent" with "nuts in his nose-bag" was growing apace. He was ready to risk even the danger of "getting converted" in order to "get a squint at the guy," so remarkable a person he seemed to be.

Mary Margaret, not pausing in her busy preparations of a lunch for one, replied:

"He went to see a man that killed himself." She flushed, as Mack laughed with his rude roar at this remark; "I mean"—she stumbled, "he—the man—tried to. It was in the papers this afternoon, and Mr. Gilchrist says, 'I want to talk to that man'."

She stopped, stood still, thinking. Mack's words of a few minutes before reverted to her mind: "there must be graft in it somewhere," he had said. Graft! The insult! In a sudden new burst of anger, Mary Margaret turned upon him.

"Graft!" she cried. "Why, he didn't have the rent money yesterday, and he was desprit! He ain't had money to get himself a pair of shoes, and nobody helps him, or comes near him, but you bums that roast him behind his back!"

As Mary Margaret wound up, flourishing a cup to drive home her climax, a tall, broad, fine-looking elderly man appeared in the doorway. He paused, stood observing the little group—a grotesque group, indeed, with two "bums" and the little gold-slippered waif boldly lambasting them! The tall man was impeccably groomed, he had the alert, man-of-the-world manner that stamps "Success" in red letters upon a person-

ality. As Grubby, muttering in embarrassment his apology—"I didn't roast him, I just said he was crazy," the stranger came quickly forward over the threshold, turned to Mary Margaret as if she were hostess of the occasion, and inquired crisply:

"Mr. Gilchrist?"

It was George Goodkind.

Once more she was the weary, heart-sick married woman.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Clean Loco!"

George Goodkind had, for a time after the rupture, lost track completely of Daniel Gilchrist. He had wanted to lose track of him. "Fool!" he had called him, and the word had epitomized his feeling. He was bitter—bitter to the point where he could not bear the mention of the young man's name. Here was a fellow, he told himself, whom he had befriended, almost fathered; after the elder Gilchrist's death, he had done everything in his power to help the boy manage his estate successfully, and to further his ambitions. He had stood by him through thick and thin, when everybody else was down on him; he had given him the chance of his life to pull himself together after the crash in the church, and get on his feet again, a successful agent for the Black River mines directors—and at a whale of a salary, he always emphasized. And the fellow had made a complete ass of himself. He had refused to *be* helped. He had walked out of Goodkind's house with some remark about "keeping his soul" that was either the insult of a scoundrel, in its implication, or the raving of a lunatic.

Furthermore, he had compelled Goodkind to sign that outrageous agreement. *That* he had never forgiven . . . .

And so, through the months that followed, he had not known whether Daniel were in New York or at the

North Pole. But at last news had forced its way to him. The fellow was down in the slums, running some kind of a settlement—another of his crazy ideas! Goodkind snapped his fingers and walked away when the news-bearer had tried to tell him more. He didn't want to hear—not a damned word!

Not until the past week had he ever inquired further. Now, however, circumstances had arisen which altered the case. He must see Daniel—at once. He had instructed his secretary to make inquiries and get the address; and the upshot was, that here he stood, Goodkind himself, on the threshold of Overcoat Hall.

Mary Margaret looked up as he entered, and politely replied to his inquiry for Gilchrist.

"He'll be here any minute. Won't you come in?"

"Thanks." The important-looking gentleman came forward a few steps, and stared at Grubby, who took refuge behind his large-leaved periodical. He then crossed toward Mack, who turned away promptly and looked toward the door, as though debating whether to "beat it." Goodkind was a formidable personage to these two miserable bits of the world's drift, with his excellent haberdashery, his fine, erect figure, his air of somewhat aggressive prosperity. Mary Margaret alone was unabashed. She went on calmly, finishing her dainty table arrangements.

Having laid the dishes in trim array, and filled a small vase with gay orange chrysanthemums from the large bowl, to adorn her table-end, she picked up a periodical and went to Goodkind with it.

"Take a magazine, and sit down," she said hos-

pitably. He nodded his thanks abruptly and took the sheet. "I got to go make the coffee," she informed him. Turning to Grubby, she gave that disciplined servitor her haughty instructions:

"You can come and carry it up in about fifteen minutes."

While she was speaking, Mack had seized upon opportunity. This young woman had a watchful and severe eye, he had noted; but the eye was just then busy. He dipped into the sugar bowl that she had set forth, extracted a handful of lumps, was stowing them away——

She turned suddenly. "Graft!" she shouted indignantly. Then, coolly looking the culprit over:

"Well, *you* ought to know graft when you see it!" With which parting arrow she went off, singing her favorite song:

I'm a pilgrim, I'm a stranger.

Goodkind had settled himself in a large chair and was reading, or attempting to read. His mind was too preoccupied to take in the words upon the page. But the pretense gave him freedom from this grotesque company. The two derelicts glanced at each other, a growing confidence, almost a friendship entering their glance; Mack drew near Grubby with occasional apprehensive glances in the direction of "the swell."

"Think she'll tell *him?*"..Mack whispered, jerking his thumb in the direction of the vanished Mary Margaret. It did not fit in with his overcoat scheme to be disparged to Gilchrist.

"Naw!" Grubby returned consolingly. "Anyway,

he don't care! He says we're all brothers in God."

"Gee!" observed the astonished Mack.

"That's what he told Jimmie Curran—brothers in God—and Jimmie just up for pinchin' a guy's pants. Jimmie lives across from his room upstairs, and Jimmie says he's clean loco."

From behind his magazine, Goodkind had caught bits of the conversation, and now he was listening intently. "Jimmie Curran"—he lived opposite Gilchrist—and he thought him insane. Interesting items. Goodkind reached into his pocket, brought forth a gold pencil, and made a note of Jimmie Curran's name and whereabouts on the margin of his magazine.

"Guess what he's got in the back yard!" Grubby went on to his new and interested friend.

"What?"

"Tennis. And handball games for children. And, in the other two houses, he's got flats—with bathtubs. And the rents ain't what they ask now for stalling a horse. Why wouldn't I say he was crazy? Everybody says so but Mary Margaret! She ain't——"

Grubby's opinion of Mary Margaret was broken off sharp, never to be uttered. A brisk, cheery step sounded outside, came swinging into the room. All three men looked up to meet the beaming smile of Daniel Gilchrist.

"Hello, Grubby! You're early!" he cried as he bustled in. He laid down some books which he carried under his arm, then threw off his overcoat with quick, lithe movements and hung it over an old umbrella which was suspended by its hook from a wall-

rack. Daniel was shabby; his garments would have shocked Mrs. Gilliam, or Mrs Tice, although they would have been obliged to admit that he was entirely neat despite darns and shiny surfaces; but, whatever his garb, the man inside the clothes was obviously happy. His voice rang, his eye was bright and laughing, his step firm and springy—every glance, movement, tone bespoke hearty cheer and good-will.

"Brought a friend, Grubby?" he went on. "That's fine!" Having put away his hat and overcoat, he came forward to shake hands with the stranger. "You're very welcome!" he told Mack. He was about to make further overtures to this newcomer, when the other caught his eye.

For a second Daniel gripped his lips tight, as painful memories came rushing in upon him. Goodkind! —Almost a year since they had met! And in that year, had the old friendship completely died? Daniel had often wondered, and the wonder always brought an ache. But now he pulled himself together—so quickly, indeed, that there was no apparent break in his running stream of cheery welcome.

"And Mr. Goodkind!" he cried, crossing to the older man and holding out a hand. "Well! You're welcome, too! Have you come down to look us over?"

Goodkind met his eyes, shook hands without cordiality, and cast a significant glance at the others.

"I've come down on personal business," he said curtly.

"Oh, yes!" Daniel responded with warmth. He turned to Grubby: "There's a box of books in the

hall," he observed tactfully. "How would you and your friend like to——"

But Grubby had received previous orders from Mary Margaret, and there was no disobeying that austere young person. "I promised to help with the coffee," he said, pulling himself slowly to his feet. A comfortable chair and Grubby never parted company with a pang—on his part.

"I see. All right, then!" Daniel said briskly, and turned to Mack. That person had been stealing swift and surreptitious glances at the overcoat ever since Gilchrist had hung it on the umbrella. Certainly a very satisfactory garment, was Mack's judgment; nothing stylish about it, "no fur collar nur nothin'," but a sound, warm coat for a late October night.

"And you?" Daniel asked him. If he had caught the surreptitious glances, he gave no sign.

"I—I just wanted to speak to you a minute," Mack responded.

"All right!" said Gilchrist heartily. "After the meeting."

Mack did not wish to run the risk that delay might involve. Here was the overcoat—here and now—and he had always found the future to be an unknown quantity. Suppose somebody else should make a getaway first with that coat?

"I—I wanted to ask you——" he repeated, as persistent as a mosquito, his shifty eyes travelling back and forth, between the coat and its owner.

"*After the meeting!*" Daniel repeated, with an emphasis and a set of the jaw that was not to be gainsaid.

When Daniel meant business, he knew how to make himself understood.

He turned back to Goodkind with apology in his look. "Sit down!" he said, indicating a comfortable chair. "Sorry to keep you waiting!"

Gilchrist, too, seated himself, and began to chat. At first no-one noticed Mack. That person, rebuffed and resentful, was passing through a tangle of emotions. First, there was his injury at being "snapped up" by Gilchrist. *His* interests were the first to be attended to, in his own estimation. Next, there was the fear of losing the coat if he waited. Somebody else might "grab it" ahead of him. And there was another fear—that "this nut," despite his insane charities, might not give it to him, anyhow, in the end. Altogether, Mack was what he would have called "sore," and he was also tempted.

His eyes fixed themselves steadfastly upon the coat. Thick—yes; a huge, warm affair, with a collar that would stand like a wall of defense against a winter night—a night on a park bench, especially. Mack drew nearer to it—stealthily, on tiptoe——

He touched it! Gee! he observed inwardly. Warmer than he had thought! One step, one pull, and he would be safe—from work and denial. Slowly, silently, with the deftness of vast experience, he was drawing the coat toward him . . . .

"I'm glad you dropped in tonight," Gilchrist was saying to Goodkind. "Because I've been intending to call on you, but there's so much to do here——"

A crash. The coat had been deftly drawn from the

rack, but, by a miscalculation on Mack's part, the umbrella, too, had come off. It had fallen—*bang, crang!* The others jumped to their feet, then discovered Mack standing there, the coat in his hand.

Gilchrist spoke. "Hello!" he said easily. "I thought you'd gone!"

"N-n-no," Mack began, stumbling. "I—I—wanted ——"

"You wanted my coat," responded Daniel promptly.

Mack seized upon opportunity and determined to bluff it through. He advanced with a glad smile of feigned relief that Daniel had found the simple explanation. "Yes," he said. "That's what I wanted to ask you!"

"I'm so glad you said so," Daniel responded. The other gaped in astonishment. "Because, if you hadn't, and I hadn't understood, you might have been tempted to take it without asking—and then you'd have been so sorry and ashamed. A man couldn't come into another man's house, and be welcomed, and then take the other man's coat, without losing his self-respect—— could he? And, of course, if we're going to pull ourselves together, and get out of a hole, we *must* keep our self-respect."

Mack had been completely taken off his guard by Daniel's surprising attitude. "I wouldn't steal—" he began, blusteringly——

"You couldn't," the astounding Gilchrist returned. "It's *your* coat. You asked for it, and I gave it to you . . . . When you've worn it—into a good job—come back and help me give another to someone who needs

it as badly as you need this one."

"I will!"

"Of course you will!" Daniel, with crisp, rapid movements was helping him into the coat and shaking him by the hand. "Goodnight!" he cried cordially.

Mack hesitated, completely at sea. "Good—night!" he mumbled. Then, as Daniel turned away, he raised his hands in a gesture of helpless amazement.

"Clean loco!" he muttered, and was gone.

Goodkind had observed this little scene with a face of astonishment and incredulity not very different from Mack's. As he returned to his chair, "Well, I'll be damned!" he exploded.

Daniel laughed, and seated himself comfortably.

"He won't come back!" went on Goodkind. "Not one in ten would!"

"All right!" Daniel assented good-temperedly. "That coat cost twenty dollars. If one in ten *does* come back, we've made a man for two hundred dollars. Isn't it worth the price?"

Goodkind scratched his chin with his finger nail. "Maybe—if a man's *got* the price! Have you?" he demanded sharply.

Daniel smiled. "Like our friend—that's what I wanted to ask you!" he admitted.

"It's not what I wanted to ask *you*," growled the elder man.

Daniel ignored this observation. "I'm rather badly in need of money," he went on blandly, "and my father——"

"Your father understood you well enough to leave

you only an income," Goodkind retorted, snatching the words from Daniel's lips. "I foolishly turned over some of the principal, and, in three months, you threw away twenty thousand dollars. You could have had a big salary, and you threw *that* away. You're an utter damned waster—if you're no worse!"

Daniel had grown taut as he listened to this, and now he put his question sharply, with keen eyes meeting Goodkind's.

"What do you mean—worse?" he demanded.

"You'll soon find out what I mean! You've had my son's wife down here, haven't you?"

Daniel went white, but he answered steadily and clearly: "Once or twice."

"Or three times . . . . or a dozen!" broke out the older man. "*He* knows!" His fists were tight clinched now; the purple veins that Daniel knew so well were showing at his temples.

Daniel held his voice down, although it was distinct. "I've asked her not to come again," he said.

"And *he's* asked her . . . . but she's coming when she likes. She says so. Because she's in love with you . . . . God knows what women see in your kind of man!" Goodkind suddenly burst forth furiously. "There was Pearl Hennig——" he began. But Daniel put out a hand.

"Please!" he pleaded.

"Oh, my son told me!" Goodkind had risen in the excitement of his anger, and was now pacing the brown linoleum with angry creaks. He paused, facing Daniel, eyes thrust close to the other's:

"And I hear—in the neighborhood—that you've worse women than that running here! Women of the streets!"

Daniel, too, had risen, and he met the accusing stare of the other serenely. "Not many," he answered. "They're welcome, but they don't come." A sad, flickering smile crossed his face.

"Hmph!" snorted Goodkind disgustedly. "Well, that's your business! And if your neighbors get sick of having a resort of this kind in their midst, and drive you out, *that's* your business! But my son's wife——"

"Is *her* business!" interrupted Daniel with sudden acerbity.

"And his!" snapped Goodkind. "Only Jerry's in no condition to settle the matter! He's broken down from worry and overwork, and you're partly responsible, and that puts it up to me! You can take this as a final warning! If you see Clare again, I'll act, and I'll act quick. That's all! Goodnight!" With a swoop, he gathered up his coat and hat. A long, wrathful stride, and he was at the door.

But the most of this tirade had been lost upon Daniel. During it, he had slipped into a reverie; he was tussling with a problem of his own, far from the subject under discussion. And now, as the other was departing, he roused himself with a jerk and stepped forward to detain him.

"Oh! Mr. Goodkind—"

Expecting capitulation, the other turned, stepped back a trifle. "Yes?" he inquired encouragingly.

"How about the money?"

Goodkind turned on his heel with a snort. "You've had what's coming to you!" he snarled.

"But that's *nothing!* I pay half that for these crazy houses! And I've gone terribly in debt fitting them up!"

"With bathtubs and tennis courts!" sneered the other.

"People must have baths."

"These dirty immigrants!"

Daniel could not restrain a smile. "The dirtier they are, the worse they need 'em. I want to show them how to live, and I want to show other people that you don't have to make a pigpen to make a profit!"

"Are you making a profit?" demanded the financier.

"Enormous!" cried Daniel, with an enigmatic smile. "And, to go on, I've got to have twenty-two thousand dollars."

"Oh, is that all?" Goodkind's foot came down upon the linoleum with a crunching sound. "Twenty-two thousand dollars to go on making a fool of yourself! Well, you won't get it!"

Daniel eyed the other coolly, but there was a touch of the financier's own shrewdness in his eye as he asked:

"Not even as an advance?"

"Not—a—penny!" Goodkind separated the words for emphasis, bringing out each as if it were the report of a rifle.

"Don't drive me to——" began Daniel, and halted.

"To *what?*"

Rather at a loss, Daniel concluded: "To ask for an

accounting!"

It was the last straw. Hardly believing his own ears, Goodkind shouted, *"To ask for—WHAT? WHAT?"* He seemed to be mouthing words that he could not utter in his rage. "Now listen to me!" he went on at last. "I've stood all I'm going to stand! You've run amuck! You've become dangerous to yourself—and me—and the neighborhood! You're going to stop it, and you're going to stop now!"

"That's your mistake," came the level retort.

"Is it? A year ago you gave me twenty-four hours to sign a paper, and I did it, and it cost me two million dollars! Tonight I give you thirty minutes to shut up this place, and quit seeing my daughter, and if you don't do it——"

"As I won't!"

"I'll be here inside half an hour with a doctor!"

"And then?"

"Then we'll file a petition to have you declared incompetent!" Once more the visitor started for the door.

As Daniel saw Goodkind departing, and took in, with one blinding flash of realization, all that his threat might mean, the horror of it swept over him. To be seized, bound—figuratively, but none the less actually—to be checked, abruptly, completely, in his work . . . . His work! His all, his life! All that he had dreamed and struggled for, that he had sacrificed the last cent to carry out! His vision, at last beginning to out-picture itself in the world of reality——

"Mr. Goodkind, Mr. Goodkind!" he cried, stepping

forward, laying a beseeching hand upon the older man's arm. "You don't mean that? You don't mean that because I'm trying to help——"

"Help—whom?" cried the other scornfully. "Strikers, and street women, and general riff-raff! And you don't even help *them*—because nobody can! And if you *could*, and *did*, how in the name of God would that help the community? If I find you're still crazy in half an hour, I'll *say* you're crazy, and *I'll prove it!* Think it over!"

And Daniel Gilchrist, gazing desparingly after him, heard the door bang to his departure.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Cinderella.

George Goodkind had banged behind him the door of Overcoat Hall with the firm intention of never entering therein again—except to close the hall forever, if he must needs carry out his threat. That final *bang!* had expressed a world of feeling; resentment at Daniel's insult, as he deemed it; defense of Jerry's wife; hatred for the young man who had forced him to sign that paper; and scorn for his madness. With the *bang!* he had shot himself into the dimly-lighted hall like ammunition from a machine-gun; so forcibly, in fact, that he came into violent collision with a giant of a man who was about to enter the room. The fellow was neatly-dressed and orderly in appearance; he apologized promptly for the collision, although he had not been at fault. He spoke with a slightly foreign accent, evidently choosing his words and enunciating them with care.

"Excuse me!" he said politely, but his politeness did not conceal the glance of contempt which he cast at Goodkind.

"All right!" the other replied. Something surprising in that glance of contempt, even of superiority, arrested him; what did this workman mean by looking contemptuously at *him?* And something familiar about the man—his giant build, his quiet, powerful voice . . . .

He turned, followed the man back into the room. "Haven't I seen you somewhere before?" he asked. Queer, how insistent is curiosity!

The man turned, and looked down upon the other indifferently from his great height. He was very neat, Goodkind observed more clearly now; really well dressed, for a workman, as he took him to be. There was an air of self-respect and self-confidence about him, although he was entirely modest and non-aggressive.

"Yes, sir," the man replied, politely enough, but with neither interest nor deference. "My name's Umanski."

"Umanski?" Puzzled, Goodkind repeated the name. It had a familiar ring. Suddenly recollection flashed

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"*You're* not the Pole who came to my house last year with a delegation?" he cried.

"Yes," the other returned calmly.

Goodkind frowned heavily. "Well, I'll be——" he began, and halted, glancing from the giant to Daniel who was now filling his pipe from a jar on the old white marble mantel-shelf. Daniel had recovered his air of imperturbability.

"Mr. Gilchrist tell me stay in New York," Umanski now offered. His English was vastly improved since the year before; in fact, it was nearly correct. "He's teach me English," he went on, "and find me good job. I'm work now eight hours on the docks and six on myself."

This did not interest Goodkind, and, curiosity appeased, he started again to go—with another snort of

contempt for what he was mentally summing up as "the whole damned outfit." But Daniel interrupted him.

"Mr. Goodkind!" he called. "Umanski's got an invention. If you'll see it——"

"I'll see *you* in—half an hour!" snapped the other, and went.

Umanski turned questioningly to his friend. "What is *he* doing down here, Mr. Gilchrist?" The big Pole scented trouble, and was ready for defense where Daniel was concerned.

Gilchrist smiled. "He says I'm crazy, and he's going to shut up this place. Of course, he won't." He picked up one of the books he had brought in, and opened it. Either he felt no concern at Goodkind's threats, or he intended to show none.

But Umanski's heavy brow drew in anxiety. "Don't be too sure!" he said. He had had his own experience with the steel-trap personality of Goodkind.

"Nonsense! I made him angry, that's all." Daniel took a chair, and settled himself as though determined to be at ease. "He'll let off steam before he's reached the corner. Mr. Goodkind's bark is always worse than his bite—I know him of old." His eyes began to travel along the page. He slid several inches lower in the comfortable chair. That was an interesting passage! Great way the author put it, that idea about not putting your hand behind your back when the world reaches out to shake! Daniel marked the lines—he could quote them in one of his talks. With eyes still on the page, he observed, in conclusion:

"And somebody's told him a lot of lies!"

"Somebody's told a good many people lies!" the Pole exclaimed. "Yesterday I heard——" He hesitated, then started again: "Yesterday I heard a man say you run this house to—to——" Again he stopped. How go on? His impulse had been to tell Gilchrist the facts openly, for his own sake—his own self-protection. But the words stuck in his throat. He went red, and stood silent, turning his hat around and around in his two big hands.

Gilchrist looked up sharply. Something in the sudden silence, more than in the words already uttered, startled him.

"To—what?" he demanded.

Umanski met his steady, imperious eye, his own equally steady but his face scarlet with embarrassment.

"To—get women," he answered.

Daniel's book went to the floor with a slam, and lay sprawled, with crumpled leaves. "Who said that?"

"A wop named Malduca."

"Oh, yes!" Daniel recollected the man. "I took his daughter in here once—for a week—until he got sober." His hands fell to his knees, he sat for a minute staring at the floor. For that minute, despondency fought within his soul for the upper hand. Wasn't the fight hard enough, anyway, it demanded, without misunderstanding to boot? Without malicious, unwarranted charges, without stabs in the back? Then, at Umanski's next words, he roused himself, shook off the gloom that was falling like a wet blanket——

"There's a good many like that," the Pole was saying.

"Oh, not a good many!" responded Daniel cheerfully. His native optimism strode to the front again. He smiled back at his friend.

But Umanski was too anxious for the man whom he worshipped to shake off his gloomy fear. "They's enough to make trouble for you, Mr. Gilchrist," he said. "Why not you carry a pistol?"

Daniel laughed. "It's generally men with pistols that get shot."

But Umanski stepped close to him, looked, with earnest, troubled pleading, into his face. The giant's eyes were like those of a wise, devoted dog that scents trouble threatening his master and seeks, imploringly, to lead him to save himself in time.

"Mr. Gilchrist! Mr. Gilchrist! Please! One o' them fellows get you——"

"Shh!" Daniel commanded sharply. For at that moment he had caught sight of Mary Margaret in the doorway; none of *this* must reach the ears of his little friend! He silenced Umanski with a sharp glance accompanying his whisper, and turned with a smile of greeting to the child.

Mary Margaret paused for a moment at the threshold, hanging upon her crutches. She was inspecting Daniel, much as a solicitous mother might, with loving severity, inspect her prodigal upon his return.

"I s'pose you ain't had any supper!" she declared at

length, shaking a thin little forefinger at him.

"Not yet!" he admitted, pretending a hang-dog shame. "Don't scold me too hard!" He rose, seeing Grubby in the offing with a tray. The stern little foster-mother entered now, advancing with authority to the end of the table where she had set forth the dishes so daintily; her henchman followed, red, and puffing ostentatiously with the weight of the laden tray. She waved to him to put it down; then, taking up dish after dish herself, she set forth a tempting meal and indicated with a magnificent gesture of hospitality that Daniel was to partake.

Umanski had dropped the subject of hostility at Gilchrist's command, but now he came forward with other business in hand. "I brought you some money," he said.

"Money?" Daniel's eyebrows went up in surprise.

"My boss he give me another raise. He gonna make *me* boss after while. So I like to begin pay back what you lend me." He dived into a pocket, and produced a fat roll of bills.

Gilchrist raised a hand of protest and shook his head vigorously. "No, no!" he exclaimed. "Wait till you've sent for your family."

Umanski's face brightened all over as though a lamp had been lighted behind it. "I'm gonna send now!" he cried. "My big boy I'm gonna send school . . . . college, maybe. That pump I make she goes fine. I show my boss—like you say—because he know about coal mines. And he say if she work she save whole lots of lives and money! Ah! She work, all right!"

He laid down the bills as he spoke, on the table before Gilchrist. Plainly, his offering was made deliberately, and he had no intention of taking it back. And now, from another pocket, he produced a much dog-eared and thumbed volume—an English grammar.

"How about I go upstairs and study?" he inquired.

"Sure! Go right up to my room! I'll be along after the meeting!" Daniel responded heartily, and Umanski happily set off for his study hour. During past months he had known the joy of receiving; now he was knowing the greater joy of giving. This was a new world, indeed, to Umanski, and a shining one.

As Mary Margaret's henchman started off, Gilchrist inquired, "Where are you going, Grubby?"

Grubby's round red face, framed in its gray stubble, turned back long enough to reply, with solemn impressiveness:

"Sandwiches!"

And he was gone. Mary Margaret found herself alone, for a cosy chat, with her hero.

"Your supper's ready!" she cried, standing off to survey the table-end with smugness. She gave a solicitous pat to the snowy cloth, making smoothness smoother; straightened a fork; turned the flowers a bit, to put their best side toward the guest. It was such fun to serve supper to Mr. Gilchrist! Only, "If you don't look out, and remember when it's meal time, you'll get sick, and *then* where'll you be!" she warned him tenderly.

"I couldn't ever forget a meal if they were all like this!" he cried gayly, starting to take his place at the

table. "Gracious, but it makes me hungry as a timber wolf, just to look at it! Thank you, thank you, fair hostess!" He paused long enough to sweep her a gallant bow. He was the nicest, funniest, Mr. Gilchrist! Just the way he said things made Mary Margaret clap her hands and squeal with delight!

As he bowed nearly to the ground, he caught sight of something very shiny, very dazzling.

"*What?* What's this we're wearing?" he demanded. "*Golden* slippers?"

"Uh-huh!" She fairly hugged herself. She had been wondering every minute when he would notice them! "Aren't they grand—simply *grand?*" Her eyes shone like stars, they far more than reflected the somewhat dirt-dimmed brilliance of the ancient finery. "I took 'em out of a barrel of clothes that pretty lady sent," she explained.

Daniel gallantly pushed her chair up to the table, then took his seat.

"So—I'm to have supper with Cinderella!" he cried.

What a glorious idea! She—Cinderella! Her favorite heroine of fiction! Mary Margaret squealed again with delight.

"Gee! I love that story!" she told him, putting forward a steamy dish of stew for him to help himself. He had taken the seat at the end of the table as she had prepared it for him, and had placed her close to his right hand, just around the corner, so to speak. It was wonderful to be here, all alone, so that he could talk just to her and nobody else; she didn't care about supper, while she could hear him!

"Cinderella . . . ." she murmured in happy reverie. "When you tell it to me, do you know, Mr. Gilchrist, you—you make me believe I'm her!"

Daniel, being a healthy man and a hungry one, was dipping vigorously into the savory stew, but he found time to observe:

"If you believe it—you *are!*"

Mary Margaret shook her head gently. "I guess believin' ain't never goin' to make *me* dance!" she said with an involuntary glance at the crutches that he had placed in the corner.

"You can't tell," Daniel returned. "If you believe hard enough . . . ."

But she shook her head again. She didn't mean to be sad, because that might make Mr. Gilchrist feel bad, but a spade might as well be called a spade, she supposed. Mary Margaret's soul was romantic up to a certain point, but, once it reached that point, it was compelled to look fact in the face.

"That's what you said before," she reminded him regretfully. "And I've tried, and tried. But somehow it don't work."

Daniel brought down an emphatic palm upon the white tablecloth. The lid almost popped off the sugar bowl, so emphatic was the blow of that palm.

"That's the very time to go on!" he declared. "Don't you remember what I told you? If we stop, just because it doesn't work, then—that isn't faith!"

He had paused to gaze at her with earnest eyes while he said this; her own big, eager eyes in her pinched little face gazed earnestly back at him. She was striv-

ing with all her soul to grasp what he said and to apply it.

"No," she agreed hesitantly. "I s'pose it ain't." She had striven so hard, though, for this faith that he had talked of; she had believed, or she believed that she had believed, with all her might and main. And still those long crutches went travelling up and down, in and out, in the place of Mary Margaret's little feet.

"But how'm I going to do it?" she sighed.

He had laid down his knife and fork, he had forgotten his supper again, as though he didn't know what it was to be hungry. "Try again!" he said. "Try over and over, and never quit trying! Faith moves mountains. Listen to me, Mary Margaret, while I tell you another story—not 'Cinderella,' this time."

She drew close, eyes fairly devouring the thought of "another story."

"Once upon a time there was a woman who had been sick twelve years," he began.

"What was the matter with her?" demanded his breathless listener.

"I don't know," he was forced to admit. "But there was a Man in that city who said He could even make the dead rise. And everybody laughed at Him . . . . as they would today!" he added, with a sad little smile tweaking the corner of his mouth—a smile for himself alone.

"Yes—go on—please!" she begged as he paused. She didn't realize that her adored and hungry hero was being delayed still later in his efforts to satisfy the inner man. So lost was she already in the story, that she

could only beg breathlessly for more.

"But the woman didn't laugh at Him," he went on, "and one morning, when He was passing her house, she got up and followed Him . . . . just to touch the hem of His cloak. And what do you think?"

"I dunno!" It was a mere whisper. The suspense had taken away Mary Margaret's voice.

Daniel leaned toward her, looked deep into her glowing eyes. "She was cured!" he told her. "And the Man said——"

"Oh, now I know!" At last she had connected this wonderful story with one she had heard before. Eagerly she finished it:

"I know! He said, 'Thy faith hath made thee whole'!"

"That's right." Daniel returned to his plate. Mary Margaret was thoughtful for a long time. At length she asked:

"Mr. Gilchrist! Could God do that—for *me?*"

"Why not?" he asked her.

"It would be an awful big favor!"

"But if He doesn't you must go on," Daniel said firmly. It gave her a wonderful feeling of strength, just to hear him; it was as if some great, invulnerable rock were to speak and tell her to rest upon its power and never to be afraid again. Mr. Gilchrist was like such a rock, to her. He never budged a mite from his position, and nothing ever shook him or changed his belief. Mary Margaret felt as though she had been cast upon this rock, while struggling in stormy seas, and had found upon it a secure footing—in it, a refuge

from further storms.

"If faith doesn't heal our hurts," he continued, snatching what supper he could between clauses, "it helps us to bear them. And that's almost the same thing, isn't it?"

Rather doubtfully, Mary Margaret tried to assent. "Ye-es," she sighed. "I—s'pose so."

"Like believing you're Cinderella!"

"Ye-es."

"We can't decide what we want," Gilchrist went on gravely, "and then be angry and doubtful because it doesn't happen our way. Because all the time it's happening His way. The only thing we can be sure of is that He knows what's best."

"That's right," she assented, doubt fading from her little face now. "You mean," she asked, "if God wants me to be well, some day He'll make me well?"

"If you believe hard enough," Daniel told her firmly.

"And if He don't?"

"Then *that's* right . . . if you believe hard enough."

Mary Margaret had been drinking in his words, and the look of doubt was banished completely at last. Yes, she would follow—wherever he chose to lead. She knew only too well how hard his own life was, how much he sacrificed, with what desperate force of will he held to his own faith against all outward evidence.

"I will, Mr. Gilchrist!" she cried, her face shining. She drew a long breath, and rose. She glanced at his plate—hardly a mouthful eaten! For shame, she said to herself, that she had let his body fast while he fed her hungry little spirit!

"You ain't hardly touched your supper!" she mourned repentantly.

"I've had plenty," he returned with good cheer, laying aside his napkin. "And now—I've got to get ready for the meeting!" He rose as briskly and freshly as though he had been enjoying a square meal.

"I'll send Grubby up for the tray," she said, and departed, to hasten about her own duties.

Daniel, although standing, snatched a final gulp of coffee. Strength in that, perhaps! No telling what lay ahead. Then, turning to make ready the room, he noticed that the window-shades had not yet been drawn. He stepped forward to the street windows to attend to them.

It was while he stood at one of the high windows, his hand on the shade-cord; while he paused, looking out at the night of the great city; that a woman entered the hall. He did not hear her step; he was engrossed for the moment in the picture before him. Always this seething, eager, hurrying life fascinated him. It was so alive! It pushed so, desired so, hastened so! Like a multitude of ants, each with some driving purpose, the human beings before him rushed, jostled, ran, collided, in their haste to reach—what? Home—affection—money—ambition—of one kind or another. Little black insects, scurrying along the sidewalk, darting across in the very jaws of traffic . . . . dark, tiny figures upon whom the street lights played fantastically . . . . life, seething, aching, longing, rushing life . . . .

The woman stood for a moment in the doorway,

looking toward Gilchrist. The shadows of the room were such that she could not clearly make him out. She was about twenty-five—pretty, in a sensual way—cheaply flashy in dress. No experienced eye could have failed to appraise her. Her gown, her heavy rouge and pencilling, her bleached hair,—more than all these, something in her squared shoulders, her bold glance—defined the woman inevitably. An over-long ostrich plume of vivid orange drooped from a huge black hat against her tinsel-gilt hair. Her black satin dress glittered with gilt beading in aggressive design, and she wore far too much and far too worthless jewelry—bracelets, rings and necklace. The neck of the gown was low, the sleeves short, the bodice revealing . . . .

If anyone had been looking at the woman as she stood there, he might have seen at once that she was desperately frightened. She had entered the hall, fairly running from the street; her breath came in gasps, her eyes were wide and black with fear. Staring toward the window to make out the man's figure, she gave a little "Oh!" of greater fear as she caught his profile now in silhouette . . . . "Mr. Gilchrist!" she cried sharply . . . .

He turned, recognized her. "Why, Pearl Hennig!" he exclaimed warmly; but she broke in upon his greeting.

"Don't!" she cried. Too terrified to make herself clear, she only repeated, "Don't, don't!"

"Don't what?" he asked, smiling.

"Don't stand by that window! Don't, please! It's dangerous! Oh, come away, come away, quick!"

CHAPTER XIX.

Pearl's Warning.

Pearl Hennig had never returned to Black River. It was the old, worn-out story, told for the ten-thousandth time. Jerry Goodkind had, as he had promised, taken her to New York, shown her the glitter and the gilding of that great city—and had left her to a New York from which the glitter had faded, the gilding rubbed off, leaving it bare and hideous. A lonely girl on a park bench, she had sat deserted and terrified one cold morning. Jerry had returned to his social circle—and his wife.

Could she return to Joe? At first she had longed to, had even started, resolving to face her problem squarely—but had fallen back, frightened, overwhelmed at the prospect. Joe, with his jealousy, his drunken rages—she dared not go to him. And so the weeks, the months had slipped by.

Again she had found Mr. Gilchrist, again he had befriended her, eagerly striving to help. She reverenced him. But there were chapters in her life unknown to him. She never ceased, however, her worship for the one clean man she had known; and now, in a crisis, she had risked everything to save him. That was why she stood tonight at the door of Overcoat Hall.

As Pearl Hennig uttered her warning she stepped toward Gilchrist with hands extended imploringly. "It

scares me so to see you there, Mr. Gilchrist!" she cried. "You don't know—oh, it's terrible——"

But Daniel, man-fashion, smiled as at an alarmed child. She might have been no more than a little girl, frightened by a bogeyman tale. Some foolish notion, of course . . . .

"Nonsense!" he cried, as he drew down the shade and turned from the night scene reluctantly. "I'm glad to see you!" he went on, as he came toward her. "How well you're looking!"

She did not respond to this, but let out a sharp breath of relief as he came away from the danger.

"What's the matter with the window, anyway?" he asked casually. "It looks innocent enough."

"It ain't safe," she muttered.

"Are *you* going to advise me to carry a pistol?" he asked, smiling.

"No. Just to keep outa sight o' people that do."

He had reached her, had met her with a cordial handshake. Now, standing before her, hands on hips, his gaze narrowed a bit as he asked pointedly:

"Meaning——?"

"Meaning Joe Hennig."

Daniel gave more attention now, although he showed not the slightest alarm. He turned to the bench that stood beside the table and seated himself, indicating a chair to her.

"But I thought Joe went back to Black River?" he said, puzzled.

"He didn't. I told you he was ashamed to go home. I told you he was gonna stay here and get you!"

"Well?"

"Well—he stayed. I went to him at last—like I told you . . . . an' said it wasn't you . . . . an' ast him to take me back. An' he said I was a liar an' he was gonna get you. I told you all that!"

"Yes; I guess you did." Daniel, however, had to make an effort to recall all the circumstances. He was always too much preoccupied with planning what he could do to help others, to give much attention to fears for himself.

Pearl, disturbed and embarrassed, had been speaking in a low tone, twisting a soiled and heavily perfumed yellow handkerchief between her hands while she talked, watching the handkerchief wind and unwind. Now she faced Daniel, and went on:

"While he was workin' uptown I didn't hear nothin' about him. But a little while ago he lost his job, an' began hangin' around down here. An' he's been drinkin', an' talkin' wild, an' I come in to tell you!"

"That's kind of you, Pearl," Gilchrist returned. "But I'm not afraid of Joe," he added, with a smile of reassurance.

"I am!" she cried. "He's got his gang! I *know!*"

"*How* do you know?"

She hesitated; then: "Well, last night I met up with one of his pals," she explained with a certain reluctance. "An' *he'd* been drinkin'. An' he said Joe said you was livin' on women, an' this place was a blind, an' nobody's wife was safe while you was in the neighborhood. An' this man said they was gonna get together, an' drive you out. They're dang'rous, Mr. Gilchrist!"

she broke out excitedly. "For God's sake, believe me! For God's sake, telephone the police!"

She had risen, and now crossed to him, her terrified, insistent eyes beseeching him. Her voice suddenly became hysterical. It rose to a shrill appeal on the last word, and she laid a hand upon his arm, as though to hurry him to action.

But he smiled indulgently at her fright. "There, there!" he said, again assuming her to be a child. "Don't worry so, Pearl! There's no telephone here, anyway, so I can't, you see. But there's always an officer at hand, and I'm among friends, you know. So be quiet, and drop all this anxiety out of your mind. Sit down, and wait for the meeting. I haven't seen you in ages."

She did not take the seat that he pointed to, however. She turned away from him, her hand falling limp and discouraged. If he wouldn't heed her warning, what was she to do? She had long since found out that this kind and gentle Mr. Gilchrist was quite as stubborn as he was kind.

"It's two weeks," she responded to his last words, speaking in an absent tone as she turned and fell to pacing the floor. Now and again, as she paced, her eyes shot nervously toward the high front windows. She did not lose, for a moment, her sense of danger from that quarter, and she made no effort to hide or forget her fear. Sometimes she twisted the soiled yellow handkerchief, causing it to give off fresh whiffs of cheap scent; sometimes she rested her hands on her hips, facing the windows, with an air of preparedness.

"What are you doing now?" Daniel inquired with cheerful interest, hoping to draw her thoughts away from her anxiety.

She hesitated, looked toward him, looked away; "I'm workin' at Macy's," she said at last.

He showed pleasure and keen attention. "Like it?" he asked.

She faced him then, for a moment, and replied defiantly: "Better than bein' with Joe!"

Daniel didn't attempt to sermonize, but he did observe, succinctly:

"If you'd stayed with Joe, maybe he wouldn't *be* drinking!"

"He always did," she retorted. "That's why I ast you to stick around in Black River. That's one reason I quit."

"*One* reason!" Daniel put in, with a quick thrust.

She halted in her pacing, standing before him like a guilty and ashamed child, hanging her head, twisting the yellow handkerchief to a hard knot. "Well—they *was* others . . . . " she admitted grudgingly. "I—I wanted good clothes . . . . an' a good time . . . . jus' like other women . . . . "

"Yes." Daniel's voice was low, his eyes had travelled off to vacancy as she spoke. Somehow, incongruously, this woman with her sordid finery, her sordid glamours and longings, had called to his mind another woman. A woman of a class as far removed as pole from pole; and yet she, too, had been beset by desires for the beauties of life, the gaieties, the trumperies, the falsely lovely lures.

"Yes . . . . like other women," he murmured in a faraway voice; and it was of Clare he was thinking.

Pearl gave a little fling of the head. It bespoke victory, and delight, and defiance, as she glanced down at her gilt-beaded gown; jingled the bracelets on her arm; tossed the huge yellow plume beside her ear.

"An' I've got 'em!" she cried with a gesture that seemed to cover all the long-wished-for grandeur. "Clothes—you bet!"

There was infinite pity in Daniel's eyes as they returned from their wandering and met her defiant glance. It was the pity of one who looks down from far heights upon suffering, struggling, deluded humanity and aches to help.

"Yes; you've 'got 'em'," he said in his gentlest voice. "But don't you think . . . . sometimes . . . . you and the other women . . . . that they cost you too much?"

Pearl was staring at him with a puckered forehead and a pouting lower lip, still defiant, but a good deal puzzled. He meant something that he wasn't saying—there was some deeper meaning behind his words—and she felt embarrassed and puzzled. She intended to stick to her finery, however, and to defend it from the accusations that she felt hovering in the air.

"I don't get you," she muttered in surly protest against the drift that she felt in his speech.

He continued, with unswerving directness, but never losing his tone of loving pity. "I only mean," he told her, "isn't there something worth more than good clothes and a good time? A good home, maybe, with love in it . . . . and little children . . . ."

For a moment longer Pearl stood before him. The defiance had faded from her face, from her squared shoulders; she was all of a sudden drooping, her hands falling at her sides, her eyes downcast. Her lips moved as though to answer; she drew a pattern on the linoleum with the toe of her tawdry beaded slipper; then, her alarm returning, as she fancied she caught some unusual sound, she threw off the thoughts that Daniel had awakened in her mind, and roused to the former anxiety.

"We oughtn't to be here talkin'," she said nervously.

"Why not?"

"I'm frightened o' Joe."

"You needn't be," he strove again to reassure her. But no words of this kind gave her any relief. Again her frightened glance was fastening itself upon the windows on the street.

"I am, though," she declared. "I can't help it. I got a hunch. I ain't told you all this man said, an' I ain't told you how he come to say it, but he said it was gonna be soon, an' I got a hunch sumpin's gonna happen *tonight*. Please let me go out an' phone! Please let me get the police!"

Again she came close to him with imploring eyes, again she laid a hand upon his arm; and again he laughed at her as at a foolish child.

"Pearl! Pearl! You've let yourself get excited over nothing—a mere bogey tale!" he said.

But she persisted. "You're crazy, Mr. Gilchrist! You're just crazy! Ain't you goin' to show some common sense, an' pertect yourself while you got time?"

She paused, hoping in that pause to drive home her demand; but he only laughed again.

"Then I'm goin'—I'm goin' anyhow, whether you let me or not!" she cried, and whirled about. Before he had a chance to stop her she was at the door; her hand was on the knob, when it turned of itself, grasped by someone on the other side. Pearl had reached a point where the slightest thing terrified her; she dropped the knob, fell back for an instant with a startled "Oh!"; the door was hurriedly opened by the newcomer, and another woman, almost as hurried and as excited as she, rushed into the room. The other was swathed in a dark evening cloak of rich velvet, below which peeped a small satin slipper and a glimpse of pale green chiffon. She seemed somewhat dishevelled. A lock of hair escaped, a lace collar lay not smooth on the cloak . . . . Perhaps it was her manner that was the most dishevelled of all. It was as though she had just passed through some great excitement, some conflict of mental, if not physical forces . . . .

For an instant she stood upon the threshold, gazing at Daniel, who was too amazed at her appearance to speak. Then he exclaimed:

"Clare! Mrs. Goodkind!"

CHAPTER XX.

"For Better, For Worse."

Less than an hour before, Clare Goodkind had been dressing for dinner in her own beautiful room—the room that she had chosen for her own when she went to the Goodkind residence, an Easter bride some eighteen months before. Sunshine and fresh air flooded it. Its windows swung out toward the south and the west; glimpses of the Park offered green landscapes in spring, red and yellow in autumn; near by were fashionable streets thronged with handsomely dressed pedestrians and luxurious cars, interspersed with the green brilliance of the picturesque buses.

When her eyes roved back to the room itself, they rested upon walls of delicate ivory, furniture of richly carved antique French design, draperies of restful blue. Silk cushions mounted into pyramids for her comfort. Mirrors offered her lovely glimpses of herself here, there, everywhere. Softly shaded lights glowed upon the whole picture of lavish beauty. And an impeccably expert maid waited upon her, hand and foot.

Clare, seated on a low stool before her triplicate mirror, was watching the maid's deft fingers coil her masses of hair until it shone, fold upon fold, like the heavy modelling of splendid bronze. A negligée of daring orange embroidered in green fell about her; and now the last hairpin was in place, she was all "done"

except for the new gown of filmy green chiffon which lay upon the bed, ready to be donned. Clare rose, and stood looking down upon it with satisfaction; it billowed like sea water where it lay. She pictured herself in it—like a slender sea nymph rising from the waves . . . .

She lifted the lovely green foam, smiled upon it. "Isn't it beautiful, Annette?" she cried girlishly. "I've never had a gown that was so exactly like my dreams before! They're usually handsome, or stylish, or Frenchy, or something else—but this is really a *dream* gown, like the things that one imagines—and that never come true. Put it on me, put in on quickly, Annette!"

Laughing, hurrying the maid, Clare donned the gown, paraded before a cheval glass. "Oh, Annette, did I *ever* look so well?" she demanded impulsively; and, with full honesty, Annette cried, "Never!"

"Madame has such a be-eautiful color in the cheeks!" Annette said adoringly. "It was that fine ride in the Park! It is no wonder the great *artiste* from Russia desire to paint Madame's portrait!"

"Annette, I'm going to sit for the portrait in this gown!"

"Madame! The very thing!" Annette clasped her hands in ecstasy as she gazed at her exquisite product, —for as such she regarded Clare's beauty. With reluctance she departed from the vision to her dinner, waiting below-stairs.

Young Mrs. Goodkind was, indeed, uncommonly lovely tonight, and this little incident had somehow

wakened the *girl* within her. A great Russian woman visiting in America, a portrait painter, had expressed her wish that Clare sit to her, and the honor was ranked high, for the great person disdained the most of American beauties as "merely pretty." In Clare she had found personality, and she demanded the opportunity to seize and hold it with her brush.

Clare had fluttered like a sixteen-year-old under the excitement of the unique compliment. It had come to her at a psychological moment. For in spite of lavish wealth and luxury, in spite of what the world knew as a "happy marriage," in spite of much admiration throughout her sparkling social circle, she was starving. The happiness for which she had renounced Daniel and married Jerry had never been hers; little by little, through the months, her youth had been dying like a cruelly quenched flame. It is under such conditions that a woman snatches at some trivial, transient joy with greedy fingers. So with Clare the mere facts that her new gown, although one among dozens of new gowns, was uncommonly becoming; and that a famous painter had chosen her among all her countrywomen—these things were enough to set beating her weary pulse.

"The Russian is to be at the dinner tonight," her thoughts ran on excitedly as she trailed her frothy green draperies before the mirror, and smiled back at her own starry eyes. "I shall ask her what she thinks of this gown for the portrait. She——"

"Br-r-r-r!" It was the shrill summons of the telephone. Clare automatically motioned for Annette to

answer it; then, remembering that the girl had gone, she crossed to the little teakwood table that held the extension, and picked it up.

"Good evening, Madame Goodkind. I am very anxious to begin the portrait tomorrow. I can hardly wait——"

It was the great painter herself! Clare flushed with delicious excitement, her throat fluttered——to think that the artist could not wait until the dinner to lay her plans! All the *girl* in Clare, which had been dying a slow death, sprang to life at this novel thrill.

"Oh, Madame, how wonderful that you should be so greatly interested! And I am going to show you a green gown tonight—"

"Green? Superb! A mermaid——"

Bzzzzzzz! The voice was snatched away sharply by a sudden fault in connection. A cutting-off. A breaking-in. Then a thick, heavy masculine voice:

"Of course I'll be there . . . ."

Click! Clatter! Clare hung up with one swift clash of the receiver into its hook. It was Jerry's voice—on the instant she realized the situation—he was talking with someone on his own extension, in his room next to hers, and the wires had suddenly become crossed. She had neither heard his conversation, nor desired to; but in that one swift moment all her joy, all the reawakened *girl* within her spirit, had been crushed out. With a recoil she sank back in her chair, crumpling; once more she was the weary, heart-sick married woman. All the gay excitement of the new gown, of the great artist's flattery, had vanished from her mind; she was

aware of nothing save that the man who had wrecked her happiness was there, in the room beside hers——

"So!"

It was his voice, his step. Dully she glanced up; he stood there, upon the threshold between their rooms, a hand upon the door-casing for support, a drunken sneer upon his lips.

"So—you listen in, do you?"

She did not reply to the vile charge. Her silence infuriated him.

"Oh, you needn't think I don't know it. I caught your click when you hung up. Well—what if I *did* tell you I wasn't going to the dinner tonight because of a Directors' meeting? And what if I *do* change my mind and decide to go to the dinner, after all, when Leila 'phones that she's going? And what if——"

"So you *are* going to the dinner?" she asked wearily. It flashed upon her, in that wretched instant, that the real source of her gayety earlier in the evening had been the fact that she was going to a delightful dinner party *without her husband.*

"You know damn well I'm going," he stormed on, so convinced of her eavesdropping that he laid bare the entire situation. "I caught you at it this time!" He came forward, as he spoke, into the room, lurching at every step, almost reeling in his intoxication. "You pussyfoot around, spying on me, listening in, trying to find out where I go and whom I meet——"

She flung out her arm in a gesture that expressed utter disdain, even loathing. "I don't care where you go or whom you meet, Jerry—Mrs. Thornbury or anyone

else . . . . That's past," she added, as her face sank into her palms.

"Oh—it is, is it?" he sneered, coming close. "Well, it better be! Some nerve you'd have if you did care! Why should you? I haven't asked where *you* go——"

"Jerry!"

With a cry, Clare sprang to her feet, facing him. The insult was like the blow from a lash. If a thong had whipped across her face and left it streaming blood, she could hardly have felt differently.

"What do you mean?" she flung back at him. The color had swept from her face, but it seemed ablaze with white heat as her eyes met his.

"I mean that I know all I need to know about your going down to that East Side——"

She did not wait for his insult to complete itself. Panting her words out, she hurled them furiously at him:

"Go! Go this instant! I won't permit you with your base insults in this room. Or else I go. Decide quickly. Which of us is going to leave this room?"

Somehow, in spite of his half-stupefied condition, he realized that she meant what she said. And he rallied his powers. With a swift stride he passed her, crossed to the door of exit upon the hall; turning, he faced her, his arms outspread as a barricade. He had controlled his movements with one of those flashes of self-command of which the intoxicated are surprisingly capable, and he was capably blocking the doorway before she had reached it. She, too, had crossed the room, only to find her way obstructed . . . .

"Neither of us is going to leave this room!" he mocked, grinning down upon her. With an impulse born of liquor he stooped and chucked her under the chin, vulgarly, as he might a brazen chambermaid.

She recoiled. In the seconds that she stood back, surveying him with a sickening sense of reality, the change in him came over her as never before.

It had been growing steadily but so gradually that she had not before fully realized it, she thought now. His health had been giving way like a sturdy plank that rots to nothing. His dissolute habits had at last done their work; not yet forty, he was a broken man, an aged one, from a physician's standpoint. He was thin to the point of emaciation; his chest caved, a racking cough often shook him. His eyes were burnt holes in a ghastly face. And yet they never abandoned their smile—that almost-perpetual smile that ran the gamut of Jerry's emotions.

As the smile met her now she hated it as never before—hated *him* as never before.

She gathered herself to her full height and started to pass him. But his arms stopped her. In spite of his condition, he was physically in control of the situation.

"Let me pass! You shan't stop me——" Clare pushed violently against his strength and fell back like a bird that has beaten against the bars in vain. She was panting, flushed from the exertion; fury lent brilliancy to her face, the struggle had left her rumpled, her hair slightly loosened. One shoulder had slipped from the low-cut gown, and now it rose, bare as a

nymph's, exquisite, seductive . . . .

Her husband stood looking down upon her. As he gazed, he thought he had never seen her so lovely. Her disorder was in itself an enticement; the beautiful gown, the curves of shoulder and breast revealed . . . Of a sudden all of his physical passion for her, the old desire, mounted like flame—leaped—flashed wild and high. He reached forth, seized her, drew her into his arms. Her struggles only fanned the flame. She fought him—pushed—battled primitively, like a woman of the cave, but he drew her to his breast——

"Let me go, let me go!" she cried, striving to hold her face averted. She loathed his mere touch, at any time—and now——

"Let me go!"

But his kisses conquered. She felt the beat of his hateful heart, she felt his hot, drink-rancid breath upon her lips. Kisses he showered upon her—kisses that scalded, that stung like a biting acid, so fraught were they with all that she loathed most. It was like assault; she felt like the agonized victim of a stranger's embrace . . . .

"You beast!"

With a sudden, erratic swirl of the emotional current his lust gave way to rage. "So!" he cried, "you don't want my kisses! You prefer another man's arms. That damn——"

"Don't you dare!" she cried, almost falling as he suddenly released his hold. But she gathered herself, rose tall before him . . . .

"I dare all right!" He was shrill. "It's Gilchrist!

By G—, Gilchrist!"

"Oh——" Her cry stopped, choked with horror. For the moment she could not utter another sound, so overwhelmed was she with impotent fury.

Jerry's rude arms seized her. "Then go to him! Go to him!" he shouted with a burst of oaths, and struck her with his fist, full in the breast; then flung her from him. She reeled, fell against the door-casing . . . . Clutching to right herself, her hand by chance seized hold of her dark velvet evening cloak . . . . automatically she flung it around her . . . .

The suggestion possessed by inanimate objects is potent. Clare was like the subject of a hypnotic trance, so stunned was she by all that had occurred. And now, acted upon by the suggestion of the cloak, she started forward—into the hall—down the stairs . . . . The cloak had said, "You are going, going somewhere, away . . . ." She was opening the outside door—passing down the steps . . . . A taxicab happened along the deserted street. The driver, seeing her, halted.

"Taxi?"

Dumb, numbed, unknowing, she entered and sank back in the seat of the cab. It smelled stuffy . . . .

How long after it was she did not know, that her thoughts began to wake up. What had happened? they demanded. It was all a hideous, black dream—but from it emerged distinguishable forms and casts now. Jerry—his blow—in it his drunken strength had spent itself. She seemed to recall now that, as he struck her, he had almost collapsed. With an oath he

had half fallen; struggled; pulled himself up and lurched toward the great carved post of her bed, catching at it for support. Yes, she seemed to see it all now —he had struck out, as if aiming at her, again; then, all at once, he had crumpled, had fallen, barely conscious, across the foot of the bed.

Again she saw his ugly, sordid figure—crumpled, disgusting—how queer and incongruous it looked, upon the delicate blue silk and lace of her embroidered coverlet! How vile his face, with the mouth open, the eyelids baggy! The whole picture was sickening . . . .

Then she saw herself, fleeing blindly from the house——

Where?

Where was she going? For the moment she hung in a daze, feeling the whirr of the taxicab, knowing herself to be borne along through strange streets, at sea as to whither . . . . Then she knew.

Recollection swept over her. In her strange trance the driver had asked her—"Where to, Miss?" She heard it again. And her reply—unwitting, and yet clear—*She had given the address of Overcoat Hall.*

She peered out into a dark street. A light burning dimly—a flight of tall steps—the taxi was curving toward the sidewalk——

Stupefied, terrified, outraged, not knowing what she was doing or why, she had fled to Daniel Gilchrist.

CHAPTER XXI.

Renunciation.

Daniel stared at Clare as she entered the hall. The unusual dishevelment of her appearance, her pallor and wide-eyed excitement, startled him. An exclamation escaped him. Then, collecting himself, he turned to Pearl who was again starting to go.

"Mrs. Hennig is just leaving," he said, with the suggestion of an introduction in his speech.

"Mrs.—Hennig?" Clare repeated the name dully, then turned toward the woman with a show of attention. "Oh, yes; Mrs. Hennig," she said again, as though she remembered . . . .

"*Pearl* Hennig," Daniel was explaining. "You've heard your husband mention her name."

Pearl met Clare's gaze, and a strange curiosity showed in the eyes of both women.

"I know your husband," Pearl said.

"I know you do," Clare returned. Her tone told how much she knew.

At the tone, Pearl quailed perceptibly. Even the aggressive yellow plume seemed to quail, in sympathy with its owner. Her eyes fell, shuffled about upon the floor.

"I guess you ain't got much use for me," she muttered.

Clare looked at her in tired stoicism—the stoicism born of long agony that has reached the point where

pain is scarcely felt any more, so dulled has the sufferer become.

"Why?" she asked bluntly. "What's the difference between us? Haven't we both sold ourselves to the same man?"

Pearl was puzzled. She couldn't grasp the full meaning of that remark. Did Mrs. Goodkind hate her? Or did she forgive? Anyhow, the meeting made her very uncomfortable, and she was glad to "beat it," as she told herself.

"Well . . . . goodnight!" she said and escaped.

Daniel, left alone with Clare, walked to the door and made sure that it was closed against eavesdroppers. Then he came back to her, looked down upon her with the eyes of a gravely displeased father.

"Clare," he said, "I asked you——"

She looked back into his steady eyes, her own filled with agony. The dull stoicism had passed.

"I'd nowhere else to go!" she cried, protesting at once against his unuttered words. "I've left him!"

He started. Amazement, incredulity filled his face.

"Left . . . . Jerry?" he demanded.

"Yes," she returned with forced quiet. "I have left him for good. He struck me."

At the words, every muscle in Daniel Gilchrist's body tightened. His fists clinched; he looked as if about to strike, although no adversary was present to receive the blow.

"No!!" he cried between set teeth. This intolerable thing, this unbelievable thing . . . . Surely he must have misunderstood——

"Down on your knees, you murderers—*God* is in this room!"

But Clare nodded. "Yes," she said in a low voice. "Here—in the breast! And he's lying now . . . brandy-soaked and half-conscious . . . . across the foot of my bed!"

Daniel's fists clamped themselves. "I can't . . . . believe . . . ."

"He's been drinking—more and more," Clare went on. "And, of course, there have been women . . . . from the beginning!"

Daniel's breath forced itself from between his teeth with a sharp sound. Clare, the woman he loved—to be subjected to this that she was telling of . . . .

"All kinds of women," she continued wearily. "*That* woman, and salesgirls, and stenographers, and women of our own class! Do you remember . . . . in your church . . . . a Mrs. Thornbury? He's been quite open about *her!* Tonight he came to my room—drunk—and babbled about meeting her at the dinner to which we were invited. Then he turned upon me and accused me . . . ."

She halted, glanced away. Then, with honesty, she faced him.

"Of *you*," she said.

"Clare! No, no!"

"Yes. And struck me with his fist!"

"No—you can't mean it! He accused . . . . *you?*"

"Yes. And he tried to take me in his arms! Night after night he's come to me . . . . drunk . . . . and held me in his arms. And I said once there was nothing more degrading than poverty! In the past two years, or less, I've learned what degradation means!

I've come to see your way at last! I've come to realize that the material things are nothing and that love is all!"

"Clare! Clare!" he cried.

She searched his eyes, putting her hands upon his arms, gazing into his face as though to read her answer there before she put her question. It was as though life, all, hung upon the answer to that question; as though she halted fearfully before she risked it . . . .

"It isn't—too late?" she whispered.

"It's never too late!" he said.

The color flooded her face at his words. Her eyes shone. "Oh, I knew you'd say that!" she cried. "Dan—Dan—I'll share your work . . . . your want . . . . if need be . . . . gladly! Only take me away!"

He looked at her, puzzled. "But my work is here!"

"We can't stay here!" Clare cried. "Jerry suspects us! He's made his father suspect us! Do you know what they're planning to do now?"

He nodded assent.

"Jerry wants to send you to an asylum! And he'll do it, too! The strange thing about Jerry is that, with his mind going, and his health gone, he still gets what he wants! Oh, take me away, and 'we'll have five or six rooms, and each other'!"

Her hands went out to him impulsively, as, with a glad smile, she quoted to him words that he had long ago uttered to her—words that she had scorned then. He took the hands for a moment; "Clare!" he said, and paused . . . .

An inexplicable chill passed over her, as though she

felt a rebuff in the air. And yet he was gazing at her with a world of tenderness in his eyes. What was it, that vague sense of alarm? . . . .

"Don't you understand," she said, with a touch of insistence in her tone, "that I'm offering myself to you?"

"Yes," he answered gravely. "I understand!"

"I love you!" she cried. She flung out her arms, but there was no response from his. "I need you! I've always loved you, and needed you, even when I lied to you, and to myself! This is our last chance for happiness! I've been blind, and stupid, and cruel, but it isn't too late! Take me, and hold me, and we'll both forget!"

She was almost pleading now—almost pleading for his love! And still he stood like one unmoved, his arms fallen at his sides, his face grave, even stern. She could not guess that the sternness was summoned for his own self-mastery.

"Forget?" he said slowly, as if thinking aloud.

"Forget everything!" She made a little move, as though to go to him, expecting his arms to receive her; still he made no move, only fixed that grave, stern gaze upon her.

"Won't you take me, dear?" she cried.

"No!" was his answer. Her husband's fist had not struck a sharper blow.

She recoiled. "Don't you—want me?" she whispered. She looked frightened, horrified; the shock was numbing to her.

"No!" came the answer again.

She rallied. "That's not true!" she told him defi-

antly. "You love me! You've always loved me! Look at me, and deny it if you can!"

Strangely, he answered: "I don't deny it! I love you!"

She was at sea. "Then take me!" she said, and once more her arms went out . . . .

His face was iron. What agony of love denied was hidden behind that stern exterior, Clare could not guess, although her own love taught her to sense something of his secret.

"I love the good in you," he said deliberately. "The good you're trying so hard to kill! I love you because you're big enough to do what's right!"

She looked at him miserably. "What *is* right?"

"Go back to your husband!"

"I'd rather die!" she exclaimed sharply.

"I'd rather you died . . . . than *this!*" was his rejoinder.

At last she was angry. She had flung her love to him and he had rejected it. She had pleaded, and he had listened to her pleadings like a rock. She had offered all—the devotion of a beautiful woman, her fidelity, her constant companionship for life—and he had treated these as though they were nothing, had turned aside, spurning them. Pride suddenly flung her head, flashed in her eyes; she drew back from him, erect, defiant, reproachful.

"Oh, you fanatic! You blind fanatic!" she cried. For the moment Clare was ready to believe what others said of this man.

His only reply was to gaze at her in grave serenity

and to repeat his brief, honest words:

"I love you!"

But words were not enough for Clare—any more than they are for any other woman of passionate and loyal temperament. She was a woman of not only passion, but of pride as well; she loved, and she had been rebuffed. Her hurt was deep.

"Love! You don't know what love means!" she scoffed, moved by her own pain to cause him pain even deeper. "You're only half a man!"

For long moments he gazed into her eyes. Outwardly, he was calm; but a keen observer might have seen that behind the calm was warfare. The man's soul was a battlefield, and slaughter was going on there—the slaughter of a thousand impulses, instincts, longings, passions.

At last he spoke. His voice was low and rigid, as though his throat were in the grip of a powerful hand.

"And I'm praying to God," he said slowly, impressively, "with all my strength—to save us from the other half!"

Some of her defiance faded at his words—or rather, at his tone, his look. She could not have loved him and failed to see that he was suffering. But still her hurt was raw and open; still she was very consciously the woman rebuffed.

"To save us—for what?" she demanded.

"For you," he answered," and HIM . . . and for MY PEOPLE."

He paused. Along the hall outside, beyond the door, a thin but ardent little voice was heard, as its owner

passed busily, bent upon her tasks, and singing with all her heart:

"I'm a pilgrim; I'm a stranger.

Daniel raised his hand, as if for silence; Clare's eyes followed where he had pointed, and for a moment both stood listening to the thin, joyous chirp, like that of a young bird exulting in the sunshine.

I can tarry, I can tarry but a night.

"And," said Daniel, in conclusion, "for the little girl out there!"

Already the anger had melted from Clare's eyes, her face was perceptibly softer; but still she clung stubbornly to her argument.

"And for them," she demanded, "you'd send me back to degradation?"

To where the rivers are ever flowing,

chirped toward them from the hall beyond.

"That little girl," said Daniel, "has known degradation that you and I will never know. And she's singing. Her constant companions are poverty and pain. And she's singing. She's crippled. She may never walk again. And still she can say, 'God's will be done'. She believes in me. I can't disappoint her and the rest. I'm going on with my job, and you're going back to yours!"

Clare stared at him, aghast. Could he mean—could he really be sending her back, deliberately, cruelly, without regard for all her agony—to the base life from

which she had fled? In that moment of astonished silence she dramatized herself; saw a bruised, innocent wife fleeing from the vile embrace and drink-aimed fist of a loathed husband; saw her fleeing to this strong man for protection; saw him casting her off, rejecting her love, her sacrifice, all for the sake of a blind, fanatical whim.

"You mean—to send me back—to Jerry?" she breathed, horrified.

"Yes," he returned abruptly.

"You think *that's* God's will?"

"I know it's your job," he returned. "You took it with your eyes open. It's up to you to see it through."

His crisp, practical, man-of-the-world manner didn't seem like the speech of the fanatic. Clare's sub-conscious mind was already admitting this. There was an appeal to common sense, rather than to emotionalism, in his words, and her self-dramatization looked rather absurd and childish to herself. But still, outwardly, she fought on.

"Must I go on forever paying for one mistake?" she asked him. Self-pity was still uppermost.

"Somebody must pay for our mistakes," he told her. "If we don't do it ourselves, the bill is still there, and must be met by some other. That it was wrong to make a bargain doesn't make it right to break the bargain when we get tired of it!"

Suddenly all of Clare's body sagged, went limp, as though the last drop of physical strength had flowed from her veins. Her arms fell at her sides, her head hung miserably. She sank into the nearest chair, flung

her arm over its back, rested her face upon her hand and closed her eyes. A little choking breath, something very like a sob, escaped her lips.

"I don't know what to do!" she moaned.

Nobody ever knew what it cost Daniel Gilchrist at that moment to stand firmly where he was, looking down upon her—not to spring to her, not to gather her weary, dejected, tortured self into his strong arms. If he could only hold her, clasp her tight, never to let her go—if he could soothe her, utter words of comfort and protection, promises of happiness to come—if he could press her lips . . . .

It was such a battle as he had never yet endured. All his power went into that hold of his tight—clinched fists, that grim grip of his jaw. Cold drops broke out upon his face; he felt a swaying sensation . . . .

"To do?" he said, and his tone was brave, high-hearted, full of kindly encouragement. "Go back! Go back to that poor mistaken man lying across the foot of your bed—his mind going and his health gone. Bear your punishment and help him to bear his. That's your duty!"

If his voice struggled with the last words, he concealed the fact. It rang clear on "duty," like a summoning trumpet.

"Duty! Duty!" Clare moaned. "What about happiness?" Her face was buried in the sleeve of her cloak.

"There *is* no other happiness. Oh, don't you see, my dear . . . ." He started, impulsively, to bend close to her, to touch her hair where a bronze fold glim-

mered in the light; with a quick snatch he drew himself back . . . . "Don't you see, *that's* been your *great* mistake? You're always crying—you and the world —'I want to be happy!' Happiness is service! Happiness is clean-living, and clear-thinking, and self-forgetfulness, and self-respect!"

It wasn't easy to say these things to her. It wasn't easy to stand in the attitude of teacher, when all his being longed for the attitude of lover. If half his mind was preaching to her, the other half was still praying for strength to resist the lure of that glimmering fold of bronze hair, that slender, limp form that he longed to hold.

"And love?" Clare whispered.

"Love *isn't* all," he steeled himself to tell her. "Not the love you mean. You said: 'Take me, and we'll both forget.' Could we have forgotten promises unkept, faith disappointed, aspirations unrealized? No, my, dear, love isn't all; nor even happiness. There's something bigger, and better, and more important; and that something is——DUTY!"

In spite of her buried face, Clare had been listening to every word. Little by little her anger had disappeared. She was weary, heart-hungry, but submissive. His lesson had struck home; she could no longer deny that he was right. Her hurt pride had given way to her instinctive knowledge that Daniel loved her; every bit of her subconscious mind recognized this, in spite of his words, in spite of the fact that he had resisted her arms outstretched to him. She had tried to dramatize herself in melodramatic style; had tried to

picture herself as coldly repulsed by the man she had loved for years; but Clare was, fundamentally, sane, and she knew better. She knew that Daniel Gilchrist loved her with all his soul—had always loved her—would always love her; and that, if he turned aside from her now, it was because he sincerely and bravely followed what he saw as his duty—and hers. Almost she herself was convinced, even; but still she put forth a feeble protest:

"The world doesn't think that!" she murmured reproachfully.

"That's what wrong with the world!" he replied promptly.

There was a long pause. Clare stifled a sob, raised her head, but did not look at him; absently adjusted the crumpled chiffon at her shoulder, touched her handkerchief to her eyes. He caught the faint, exquisitely subtle whiff of the delicate French perfume that she used—he knew it of old, Clare was never without it; it stabbed him, as the refrain of some old and loved song heard again can stab. But still he stood waiting . . . .

With averted head, she rose, stood before him. "You—you want me—to go back?" she asked in a smothered voice, eyes upon the distance.

"I want you to be right!" was his rejoinder.

Suddenly she wheeled, facing him. Her head came up, her muscles seemed to tighten, her whole body was firm, valiant, determined.

"Well, then," she cried, "I'm going through! I'm going back—and play the game . . . . with you in my

heart always." As she looked at him courageously, a pathetic little smile flickered into her eyes—a wistful imploring smile, like a frail ghost that knocks at the door and begs . . . .

"You don't forbid that, do you?" she murmured plaintively.

His eyes drove into hers. "You are in mine *always!*"

"And this isn't goodbye," she said softly. "Sometime . . . . somewhere . . . . in this world . . . . or out of it . . . . there must be a moment . . . . and a place . . . . to retrieve mistakes." She turned away. "Goodnight," she said, without the stir of a hand in his direction, and went to the door.

He strode to it, opened it. For the moment he felt that his own strength was failing him—the more so, that she had found hers—and he could barely restrain himself from detaining her.

"Clare—Clare . . . ." he began. Then, with a hand out, "Goodnight!" he said.

She took the proffered hand for an instant, and then she was gone. Her light footsteps down the hall . . . The stir of a car, as the taxicab driver, whom she had told to wait, caught sight of her in the doorway . . . The sharp shutting of the outside door behind her . . . Again her footsteps—only Daniel's ears could have heard them now—as she went down the long brown stone steps . . . A cab door, faintly slamming . . . .

Silence . . . .

First puzzled, then out of temper, the great Russian waited next morning in her studio. She was not ac-

customed to having her wishes lightly regarded. But the beautiful Mrs. Goodkind, who had promised to sit for her portrait and who had been mysteriously absent from the dinner last evening, never came.

A gracious but brief note later on explained that Mrs. Goodkind was not well and had decided the portrait must be abandoned.

CHAPTER XXII.

Attack.

Daniel dragged himself to the bench and sank upon it, his arms outflung upon the table, his head pillowed upon them. He was completely drained. The effort of renunciation had left him stripped of his last vestige of strength. He lay there, feeling that he could never rise again, and too far gone to care.

I'm a pilgrim; I'm a stranger.

Again the song sounded chirpingly along the hall. The door opened; Mary Margaret entered, singing now in a higher key, in march tempo, keeping time with her brisk crutches. She even swung herself in time; she gave a martial air to her every motion.

I can tarry——

"Oh-h-h!" She broke off with a sudden cry of dismay as she caught sight of her fallen hero. "Why—what——?" She came close to him, peering with sharp anxiety at his limp form. He did not stir, did not even look up—merely sat there in that sunken posture, his faced buried.

Her pinched little face sharpened with fear, and it was white. "Ain't you—ain't you well, Mr. Gilchrist?" she asked timidly. Never before had she seen this Rock of Gibraltar, upon which she leaned, show

any sign of human weakness. She was as terrified as a child always is in the presence of the grown-up who gives way. It is the earth crumbling beneath the child's feet.

Daniel remained silent for a moment, in which her terror grew, then he said wearily, his face still buried:

"Just tired."

Mary Margaret drew closer, reached out a timid hand with an impulse to pat him as he had patted her when she needed comfort—then, too bashful to do so, she withdrew the hand. But she attempted to proffer the comfort.

"Maybe you ain't believin' hard enough?" she said.

He looked up at that. It was a relief to see his face, although it made her heart ache—it was such an unhappy face. Something must be dreadfully wrong, Mary Margaret was sure of that; she must speak with cheerful encouragement, as he always did to her when she was "in the gutter in feelin's," as she expressed it.

"It's most time for the meetin'," she told him. She was sure that nothing would rouse his interest as much as *that*.

She was true to an unerring instinct, and the thought of his work did rouse Daniel. Its imperative demands were always at his heels and he was thankful for the fact. No better way to shake off self. He smiled back at Mary Margaret now, although the smile "looked pretty sick at its stomach," she observed inwardly; he rose slowly, dragging himself to his feet.

Grubby entered, his round red face shining proudly above the huge laden tray that he carried gingerly.

"I brung the sandwiches!" he announced, feeling that he had performed a noble achievement, and set the tray down upon the table with a sigh of satisfaction. Any worthy act on his own part made a deep impression upon Grubby.

A large and loosely-hung person now entered, decidedly the worse for liquor. Mrs. Mulligan wore the invariable black of this particular type of matron—the type that one occasionally meets around the police courts. Black smeared with streaks of dust, and a few careless speckles of dried mud. A mangy-looking fur scarf enveloped her throat, a marvellous array of plumes depended from her hat. She came slinking in with furtiveness, but an eager eye shooting toward the spizzling radiator.

Behind Mrs. Mulligan came Mr. and Mrs. Henchley. He was a middle-aged and respectable locksmith; a shy little man who had a way of slipping behind the petticoats of his large and formidable wife. As the three advanced into the room, Daniel pulled himself together and smiled a welcome at them.

Mary Margaret, however, came forward to act as hostess. Her hero was "down," and she was going to help him through! "Good evening, Mrs. Mulligan!" she opened up with vigor.

The be-plumed and inflamed Mrs. Mulligan shot her a sultry glance. "It *is* not!" she retorted with a hiccough.

Grubby frowned disapprovingly upon her. Grubby felt himself host quite as much as Mary Margaret hostess. He whispered to the latter:

"Bums—like that—ain't got no business here!"

Large Mrs. Henchley, seconded by small Mr. Henchley, took up the duties of polite society to show that they were not in *that* class, no indeed! "Good evening, Mary Margaret," and "Good evening, Mr. Gilchrist," they said with an air of conscious elegance, performing their greetings with elaborate bows.

"Good evening, and welcome!" Daniel had a hand out to everyone. His voice had regained something of its usual ring, and his smile was warm, though strained.

"I guess we're early," observed Mr. Henchley, feeling that the conversational ball must be kept rolling.

"Yes," said Mrs. Henchley, taking the reply from Daniel. She drew near him with an air of purpose. "I wanted to come early, so's to get a chance to speak to you—about Mr. Henchley's pants."

"Mr. Henchley's—*what?*" blinked Daniel. He had only just recovered, and he felt dazed by this inexplicable remark.

"Pants," she repeated firmly. "I took out a spot—with gasoline—and hung 'em on the fire-escape that runs across from this house, and tonight they was gone and I think you ought to look into your lodgers!" Mrs. Henchley's firmness had increased as her tale went on; now she brought her lips together with a snap like that of a purse, folding her arms upon her stomach and tossing her head with an air of righteous indignation, while her gaze slid down her Roman nose.

"I will!" Daniel responded willingly, but was cut off

from further remarks on the subject by the entrance of Miss Levinson.

"Good evening, everybody!" she sang out cheerily.

Miss Levinson was a Jewess, a garment-worker. She was a plain young woman—thoughtful, studious, spectacled; but she was attractive in spite of the plainness. Intelligence shone in her black eyes behind the big round glasses; something kindly smiled in the large mouth. She shook hands with Daniel with an air of self-possession, and nodded around upon the various members of the group.

"Good evening, Miss Levinson," they returned after their various manners. The Henchleys were again consciously elegant in their greeting; Mrs. Mulligan's was a cordial hiccough.

"I've brought back your book," Miss Levinson said to Daniel, handing him a volume which she had encased in white paper with careful neatness.

Mrs. Henchley swept forward. If there was to be a conversation upon literature, here was her place!

"What've you been reading?" she inquired with alert interest.

"George Bernard Shaw," Miss Levinson responded pleasantly, though she did not open a discussion upon the merits or demerits of the author.

Mrs. Henchley frowned. Some obscure writer, she supposed. Now, *she* read only the masterpieces!

"I suppose you ain't read 'The Sheik'?" she inquired with a touch of disdain for Miss Levinson's taste.

With justifiable pride the latter returned, "I've been reading 'Cæsar and Cleopatra'."

Daniel opened the book that she had returned to him. "That's where we got the quotation on the board," he said. "I've jumbled it a bit . . . ." He rippled over the pages . . . . At last he found it. He read aloud:

> And so, to the end of history, hate shall breed hate, murder shall breed murder, until the gods create a race that can understand.

Miss Levinson seemed drinking in the words with her homely, hungry, spectacled, large-featured face. Her eyes glowed with response to the idea. "That's it, isn't it?" she cried. " 'A race that can—' "

She was bruskly interrupted. The door was burst open from without, and, with a rush, Pearl Hennig flung herself into the room.

"Oh! Mr. Gilchrist!" she cried in panic.

Daniel turned and looked at her calmly. "Oh, Pearl," he said in a quiet tone and with entire ease of manner. "I thought you'd gone."

"No!" she said. "I—I've been watchin'!" She was panting so wildly that her words were barely intelligible. "I've got to speak to you—quick—*quick!*"

Daniel smiled in the most casual manner, and replied, "In a few minutes." He was busy just then with the motion-picture machine, which he intended to use that evening.

"No, Mr. Gilchrist! *Now!*" The woman was fairly screaming; Gilchrist's nonchalance distracted her, terrified as she was, counting every passing moment as vital. "Joe's out there!" she panted.

Mrs. Mulligan, disturbed in the peace which she was seeking in the cosy corner beside the radiator, peered forth between the dangling plumes of her hat and hiccoughed: "Aw, shut up!"

Daniel came forward. As host and leader he desired no disturbance. The Wednesday meeting hour was very precious.

"Mrs. Mulligan! Pearl!" he rebuked them gently, each in turn. "You're interrupting! . . . . You were saying, Miss Levinson——?" The discussion of Shaw was far more important than Pearl's alarms to Daniel; he felt that Miss Levinson, starved as she was for some intellectual discussion, must not be cheated of a moment.

The girl took up her dropped thread. "We seem always to have hated everything different from ourselves," she went on thoughtfully. "Different in station, or race, or religion."

"Yes. It's stupid . . . . and instinctive. I've noticed we're inclined to blame a man for a pug nose . . . if ours is Roman." As Miss Levinson involuntarily glanced at his own perfectly chiselled feature, the thought flashed amusingly through her mind that if *he* could forgive another's pug, anybody ought to!

"Some day," he went on, "we'll get over the idea that all who differ from us are villains, and that we should hate each other instead of trying to understand each other. It was on the battlefields that I came to believe a man's life might well be given to teaching and to preaching . . . . love!"

With the word came a crash. A half-brick came hurtling through one of the front windows; it was sped with violent force, and its entrance was like an oath. Ripping, splintering, the pane fell in bits about the brick where it lay on the floor.

"Oh! The Saints save us!" shrieked Mrs. Mulligan, tottering up from her warm corner. "Oh-h-h-h!" screamed Mrs. Henchley. Cries went up from the others in a frightened chorus. But Daniel, as unperturbed as if some one had flung him a mere "howdy" in passing, went on without pause.

"Don't be alarmed," he said smiling. "It's only some hoodlum."

But Pearl would not listen to what she deemed madness on his part. Somehow she must rouse him to his own danger. "Mr. Gilchrist, it's Joe!" she screamed once more. "I seen him in front! That's why I couldn't get out!" She turned now to the others, as Gilchrist still met her with that imperturbable calm. Perhaps *they* could be roused!

"Oh, somebody go get the police!" she cried.

At her words, there was a general movement among the others toward the door. The word 'police" was a match to gunpowder. Mr. Henchley and Mrs. Mulligan vied to reach the door first, to spread the alarm; all at once the strong right arm of Daniel barred their way, his hand held the knob. He turned, facing the excited group.

"No!" he cried.

With weak mutters they subsided, casting doubtful glances at each other, at Daniel, at Pearl——

"He's got other men with him!" she went on. "He'll kill you!"

At that moment the front door of the building was heard to slam as if swung by an angry hand, and Pearl pushed past Gilchrist, hurling her body full force against the door of the room. "Here he comes!" she shrieked. "Don't let him in! Somebody help me hold the door!" She was like a madwoman by now, in her panic; fantastically, the yellow plume fluttered wildly about her head as she screamed and flung her weight upon the door.

Her strength, at that moment of fear, was supernormal; but in spite of it, the door slowly, laboriously opened.

"Pearl! Stand aside!" Daniel rebuked her firmly. Not for a moment did his sure poise waver. She paid no heed, and continued to hold the door with might and main; but the greater strength was forcing it open from without, and now the face of George Goodkind could be seen.

"It's only Mr. Goodkind!" Daniel said to her reproachfully, and her desperate hold gave way as the newcomer entered.

He was frowning, and he gave himself a shake, with an air of disgust at the sordid vulgarity of this situation in which he found himself entangled.

"Yes," he observed contemptuously to Daniel. "And your neighbors are calling." He straightened his cuffs, disordered by the struggle at the door, and adjusted collar and tie, as if fancying that they, too, might have

suffered. He stood looking with scorn over the group.

Frightened, they resumed their cries of alarm. "What's the matter?" piped Mr. Henchley, and his wife demanded, "Is there any danger?" Mary Margaret showed signs of taking matters into her own hands: "I'll get the cops!" she declared.

Before Gilchrist could stop her, the tide of affairs attended to that. Furious voices were now heard outside on the steps, in the hall, advancing riotously down the hall.

"The fake!"

"The damned pimp!"

"Drive him out!"

"Come on . . . . rush him!"

Like the shouts of a disordered, assaulting army they came, hurtling down the hall, pouring in at the door. There was no holding it now. Pearl threw herself wildly in front of Daniel, as though to shield his body with her own. Mary Margaret, on the other side of him, spread her crutches with a strange little gesture, like that of brooding wings—if only she could save him! The others retreated to the platform at the farther end of the hall.

The rowdies entered with a savage rush. Joe Hennig led them, his eyes bloodshot, his hair wild. Behind him, Jimmie Curran. Then a big dockman, his wife, half a dozen more hangers-on of the neighborhood . . . . They were drunken, they were infuriated, they were, for the time, insane; and Joe Hennig, plunging forward in advance, confronted Gilchrist with blood in his eye.

"Come on, fellows!" he shouted to his mates. "Come on! Here he is! We'll show him! We'll show the guy! *Come on!*"

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Miracle.

Joe Hennig and Daniel Gilchrist stood eye to eye in the middle of the room. Huddling, frightened, at the remote end of the hall were Daniel's followers; mouthing and muttering, cursing and growling, were Joe's, gathered close behind him, ready for the word to attack.

"Come on! We'll show the guy!" he was shouting, when he suddenly grasped the fact that this was Pearl who stood trying to shield Gilchrist. Blinded by his drunken fury, he had not realized it at first; but now he wielded the fact like a club.

"By God!" he cried. "Caught in the act!" He whirled about, addressing the gang. "That's my wife!" he told them.

Daniel gently pushed Pearl away, and took a step closer to Hennig. "Caught in what act, Joe?" he asked with composure, his eyes boring into the shifty ones of Hennig.

Joe's could not meet that glance steadily. His own vacillated. He muttered sulkily,

"Why . . .caught . . .in the act . . ." He found himself unable to make a more definite charge, and he wound up with an oath.

Daniel turned to the group of his friends who were huddling together.

"Tell him what we're here for . . . you, Grubby!"

But that follower, after the example of one Peter of a far-off day, huddled the more closely, and whimpered:

"I don't want to get into no trouble!"

And then, another follower came forward. She came bravely down the hall, swinging her frail, hunched little body between a pair of crutches. Her face glowed with valor, her head was up:

"*I'll* tell you!" cried Mary Margaret to the crowd.

Daniel whirled toward her sharply, afraid for the child. "No, Mary Margaret! No!" he exclaimed. It was the first sign of fear he had shown. Not for himself; not for the cause, greater than himself, for which he fought; but for this little frail girl . . .

The danger was drawn away from her, however, by a sudden shifting of the situation. Unobserved, some one else had entered the room; had slipped in at the door, had made his way through the mob with swift, silent movements; and now he stood there, towering above them all, lean and brawny and invulnerable. He was like steel as he stood with taut muscles, ready for battle; like girders and rivets and hoops and springs. It was Umanski.

He stepped up behind the leader of the mob. With a sudden steel-spring movement he clapped a huge hand upon Joe's shoulder. The hand pressed down with terrific power; slowly, struggling desperately but unavailingly, Joe found himself upon his knees.

"*I* tell you!" cried the Pole, taking from her Mary Margaret's task.

"Umanski!" cried Joe, as he recognized his one-time fellow worker. He cringed. He knew only too well the power of those muscles, the determination in that jaw.

"*I* tell you, Hennig!" Umanski went on, holding the smaller man upon his knees as easily as he might crush a fly to earth. "Mr. Gilchrist been friend to everybody! And now, when he *need* friend, nobody knows nothing! Well, *I* know! I know anybody hurt him gotta lick me!"

Daniel flung out a protesting hand. "No . . . please . . . Umanski!" he cried. That his friends should be involved in trouble on his account was the deepest distress of the whole situation to Gilchrist.

Joe, still upon his knees, put in a malevolent word, nevertheless. "Lickin' people ain't gonna hide facks!" he snarled.

Umanski's reply was to threaten him with his free fist. "Shall I?" he inquired significantly.

"No . . . ..no!" Daniel protested once more.

With some regret Umanski set Joe upon his feet. He couldn't help the fact that his mouth watered for so savory a morsel as settling Joe Hennig would be! But, although he reluctantly let go, the Pole's vigilant eye no more left him than does the eye of a cat depart from the mouse which she has permitted to run alone for a short distance.

Joe, shaking himself together, turned with eloquence to his gang.

"I'll show you the kinda fake that's been foolin' you!"

he cried to them. "He was a preacher, an' he got kicked outa his church!"

Various shouts took it up:

"They got onto you, did they?"

"Caught him with the goods!"

Joe went on. "He was a spy for the people that live on labor, and he came to the mines, where we was on strike, and ran away with my wife!"

Shouts again took it up:

"The dirty bum!"

"Maybe he didn't get much!"

Pearl could endure this no longer. Too enraged to be terrified now, she faced them, faced their leering, drunken eyes.

"It *wasn't* him!" she declared.

"She says that 'cause she's stuck on him!" Joe retorted.

"I ain't!"

"Well, you're workin' for him, ain't you?"

"No!"

Daniel interposed. "Your wife's working in a store uptown," he said, striving once more to adjust the trouble with friendly matter-of-factness. But this statement from him called forth a new outburst on the part of the gang.

"We know different!"

"What's she doin' here?"

"That's a good one!"

"What're you givin' us? Everybody in the neighborhood knows what she's doin'!"

Joe faced Gilchrist insolently. "My wife's walkin' the streets!" he said.

"That's a lie!" Daniel flamed back. He could show temper enough when a woman's honor lay at stake

Joe sneered. "I heard from a pal she picked up las' night . . . an' I *seen* her comin' here!"

Jimmie Curran added his testimony in a burly voice. "She's workin' Sixth Avenue!" he stated.

At this Mrs. Mulligan suddenly roused from the warm and cosy torpor in which she was indulging at the safe end of the hall, and her shock exceeded bounds. Every plume depending from her remarkable hat quivered like the sorrowful branches of a weeping willow.

"I can't believe it! I can't believe it!" mourned Mrs. Mulligan. The tragedy of a fallen woman caused a large shiny tear to roll down her carmine nose and trickle off the end of it.

Daniel's lips were set, his face drawn. He was ashy. He swung about, facing the accused woman.

"Pearl!!" he cried. "Tell me! *Is it a lie?*"

For dreaful silent moments not a human being spoke in that room. Out of chaos, a furious babel, had come deathly stillness. Pearl Hennig's whole body drooped; her eyes were downcast, she seemed about to sink. Through the silence her whisper could be hard at last, loud as a full voice:

"No . . . It's true," she said.

The gang broke into a wild shouting and jeering at that. She jerked herself erect, and turned upon them like an animal at bay.

"Well! Why wouldn't it be?" she demanded of them defiantly. She turned to Gilchrist:

"I tried to live straight . . . like you told me," she said. An' I *had* a job . . . but when the other girls got wise . . . Oh, they ain't no better than I am!" she broke out.

But his gaze held hers. Slowly the defiance in her face faded out; misery alone was left there. She could not meet that gaze and not give way before it. It was too firm, too gently rebuking, too loving, with the greater human love.

Again her eyes fell, her words trembled. "Anyway —I lied," she said. "I *am* walkin' the streets. I ain't no good. I ain't fit to live."

Her voice caught in a great, tearing sob. She sank —almost fell—at his feet. On the instant, Daniel's strong arms were around her, he lifted her . . .

"Pearl!" he cried. "Pearl!"

Standing before him, she raised weary, unhappy eyes to his. Again a sob caught her voice; then,

"For Christ's sake, ain't you done with me now?" she cried.

"For Christ's sake . . . no!" he answered. And he took her in his arms.

In a puzzled silence the gang had been watching this scene. Their mutters and oaths had died away, they frowned and stared in wonder. Incredulity, disapproval, curiosity, even awe might have been seen at various moments in the different faces; but, as Daniel

drew Pearl to him even as Another once lifted a fallen woman, Joe broke the silence.

"It's all fake!" he shouted, facing his followers once more. "Ain't you fellows on? He's got every rotten woman in the neighborhood workin' for him! Your wives ain't safe! Your kids ain't safe! Ask Jimmie Curran! He knows what's goin' on here!" And, as the door opened to admit another, an Italian, Joe concluded: "Ask Tony Malduca!"

"Here's Tony!" "Come on in, Tony!" "We want you!" yapped the greedy gang. They were like beasts on the track of prey.

The Italian stood staring from face to face with sulky black eyes. "Why you send for me? What you want?" he demanded.

"We want to know what happened to your kid!" Joe told him. "Did he bring her in here—an' keep her—against her will? Did he?"

Tony's black eyes grew blacker, his whole face seemed to be gathering like a storm. "That's what he done!" he cried.

The gang broke forth again. Voices rose, shrill, loud, rough, accusing:

"You remember Teresa Malduca?"

"You see!"

"Sure; everybody knows that! She was here a week!"

Umanski had held off as long as he could. His voice resounded now, hurled forth like a blow of his terrible fist:

"You damned wop!"

"Umanski!" Daniel reproached him.

Again the yappings of the pack:

"There ain't no woman safe!"

"He's a damned fake!"

"Beat him up!"

"Kill him!"

"That's it!" Joe shouted to them approvingly. "Don't let this big guy buffalo you! Come on! Drive him out!"

As he swung about toward Daniel, he swaggered. At one time, Joe had cringed before that superb physique, that firm, trained muscle like whip-cord. He was by no means a large or physically powerful man, and he was fully conscious of his impotence against Daniel—especially since the brief but effective lesson that the latter had once given him. But now Joe's own lack of physical strength was more than made up for. The gang behind him were his brawny arm, they were his curling biceps, they were his ready and iron-clad fists. They had followed him, had supported him to a man; backed by them, he could swagger as he choose.

"I said I'd get you, and I have!" he cried, shaking a fist in Daniel's face. At his words, the gang pressed closer behind him, but Umanski's menacing bulk still held them off.

Everybody had forgotten Mary Margaret. Between her crutches, she had hobbled back to the platform, believing that she would thus be less "in the way," and

not "worry Mr. Gilchrist" as when she had impulsively tried to fight his battle for him. But with every moment her terror had grown; watching nervously the advance of the battle, she had missed no word, no move; and now her fear for Gilchrist knew no bounds. Her little thin face was ghastly, her eyes were wide with dread; she quivered from head to foot.

At Joe's concluding words; at the pressing forward of the gang; Mary Margaret uttered a low cry—so low, indeed, that nobody noticed it. Dropping her crutches, she fell on her knees there in the far end of the hall.

"Oh, dear God!" she sobbed. "Please listen!"

And then, determinedly, she began the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father, who art in Heaven . . .

Pearl's voice cut through the room: "Get the police!"

"Police! Police!" It was Miss Levinson, who had made her way past the gang to a front window, and now leaned out, shouting with all her might.

Jimmie Curran gave Umanski a push. "Get out of the way, you!" he growled, striving to get past the giant and reach Daniel. The Pole's huge bulk, however, was a boulder.

"Bust him in the jaw!" came the yelp.

And now, for the first time, George Goodkind made his way into the thick of the battle. With broad shoulders and vigorous elbows he forced himself through the shouting, threatening, fist-shaking, cursing crowd.

"I was gonna surprise you," she confessed. "It's your Christmas present!"

"Listen to me!" he cried with authority. "No violence! You're dealing with a lunatic! Leave him alone! I've got a doctor coming in a few minutes! Leave him to me and I give you my word I'll have this place closed tonight!"

But the pack was not to be cheated of its prey. It was already licking its chops over the anticipated feast; it was rapacious, monstrous in its desire.

"Yes, and he'll open another one!"

"Sure he will!"

"Of course he will!"

"Ah-h-h! Beat him up!"

Goodkind was no coward. He faced them, met the savage faces—animal faces, they seemed—one might have fancied wolf fangs. Eyes glittered, teeth showed.

"Leave him alone!" Goodkind again commanded. "You can't beat a crazy man!" He was done with Daniel himself, as far as friendship went, but this was too hideous, too gross . . .

A woman's voice suddenly broke through the shouts and curses:

"Mr. Gilchrist ain't crazy!" it cried. The voice was Pearl Hennig's.

She went on. "He ain't a man! Ain't you seen what he just done to me?"

Another woman retorted. She was half drunk, and leering. "Hire a hall!" she cried, and a laugh, worse than the curses, broke from the hoarse throats of the mob.

Pearl paid no attention to the sneer. "Ain't you

heard?" she demanded, stepping forward and addressing them all. "I lied to him, an' he's give me another chance, an' *I'm gonna take it!* He ain't no man! He's a Saint! I tell you he's like God!"

"Where's his wings?" inquired a street wit, and again the ugly laugh bellowed forth.

Joe gave a great hunch of his shoulders to express the utmost that scorn could reach unto. "Like God!" he cried.

"That's blasphemy!" put in the ubiquitous Jimmie Curran.

"That's what it is," Joe responded with unctuous righteousness, "an' that's what he's been tellin' em! Ain't it—you . . . Grubby? Didn't he tell you that, Jimmie? Didn't he tell you he was a Son of God?"

"Sure he did!" cried a number of voices. "That's right!" the entire gang agreed loudly.

"You see!" cried their leader with satisfaction. "That's what he's told 'em all! That's how he gets 'em!" Joe Hennig turned to Daniel. "Didn't you tell 'em you was a Son of God?" he demanded fiercely.

A silence followed the question—a silence that seemed endlessly long, endlessly charged with evil omen. The pack awaited their victim's answer. Pearl, George Goodkind, had abandoned their attempts, for the time. There seemed nothing to do but await the outcome of the hideous pursuit. The pack was not to be outdone. Upon Daniel's answer, all felt, hung the outcome.

In that long, dreadful silence, a sound reached them. Mary Margaret's thin voice had risen as her prayer

went on, over and over . . .

Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done . . .

Over and over she was repeating it, the little girl in the percale frock, as she kneeled at the far end of the room. Her crutches lay beside her, forgotten for the time; her thin knees pressed the bare floor of the platform until the tender flesh ached.

On earth, as it is in Heaven.

Daniel broke the silence of the mob. His eye had never once flinched; now, in an equally steady voice, his answer to Joe Hennig's question came:

"I am—a Son of God," Daniel Gilchrist said.

The voices broke forth with a sudden wild yapping, with snarls and cries:

"He admits it!"

"And I'm Mary Magdalene!"

"Pipe Mary Magdalene!"

"Son of *God!*"

Daniel went on quietly. Somehow, strangely, they listened to that quiet, strong voice, although faint jeers escaped . . .

"And so are we all! In you . . . and me . . . and all of us . . . deep down . . . is something of Him! We may try to hide it—or kill it—but, in spite of ourselves, we *are* Divine!"

They had listened, but only to jeer the more loudly in the end.

"Chuck it!"

"Hell! Cut the gab!"

"He's crazy!"

"Come on; smash the place!"

Tony, panting for drama, slung himself toward Daniel, his fist hovering in the other's face.

"If you're a Son of God," he thundered, in his huge voice, "then save yourself! If you're what you say—give us a sign!"

Joe was impatient of such superstitious nonsense. He wanted prompt and effective action. "Ah, hell! Come on!" he shouted. It was time that definite measures were taken, in Joe's opinion. And now two of his followers seized upon the moment to fall in with him. They climbed upon the table, and, with a concerted movement that was like the snap of a trap's two jaws, they seized Umanski from behind.

They bore the great Pole down. Powerful as he was, the two, working together, had the best of him for the moment. His downfall was the signal for attack. The rest of the gang felt their way open at last, the final obstacle removed. Shouting, they sprang forward; the two dragged Umanski away, the others surrounded Daniel until he was lost in their midst. With a crash, the table went over, chairs following. Fists flew, oaths and shouts hurtled through the room. In the chaos, men struck out at random, like madmen, knowing no aim, reckless of where the blows might fall. A seething, rocking, writhing mass of humanity. Curses. Fists. Improvised weapons snatched by in-

sane hands and wielded here and there . . . a granite paper-weight, a brass vase. Hisses. Shrieks. At last, blood . . . .

The big dockman, who, at Joe's speech, had lifted the bench to fell Daniel with it, and whose weapon was seized from the rear by the determined Henchleys, now pommelled madly with his bare fists. Not only the Henchleys, but Goodkind, Miss Levinson, Pearl, even the somewhat feeble Mrs. Mulligan, had made attempts to protect Daniel, but they might as well have attempted to hold back Niagara. Above the pandemonium their voices were faintly distinguishable, although they were, indeed, shouting with all their might: "Help!" cried Pearl over and over, and "Police!" screamed Miss Levinson. Goodkind protested vainly, "Let him alone! Let him alone, I tell you!" "Oh, dear suz an' blazes!" moaned Mrs. Mulligan.

But the giant Pole was not to be downed long. All the steel springs within Umanski's great frame seemed to have been pulling themselves into shape for an overwhelming movement; suddenly, with incredible force, he threw off his captors who were struggling desperately to hold him.

"I kill somebody!" the great Pole shouted.

He sprang to his feet, throwing off the two powerful men as if they were insects. Once more he had his muscles under control. The two men went hurtling back against the wall with impacts that left their marks. Umanski advanced toward the mob; plunging straight into the thick of the battle, he mowed his

way through the mass of men, tossing them to left and right as he went. His power seemed superhuman. The steel muscles operated like some great piece of war machinery, tempered and molded and aimed to slay.

They fought back, but in vain. They struck at the Pole, turning from Gilchrist and attacking the giant in self-defense. But their blows seemed to strike some invincible surface, to slide off like bullets from mail. In an unbelievably short time Umanski had them cowed. They gave way, fell back, his way was cleared . . . his way to Daniel . . .

But, in that moment, it came to Umanski that it was too late. Outstretched upon the floor Daniel lay, his body as motionless as death, his eyes closed. He had fallen in the overturned table, and now his head was propped by one leg of the table, while his arms hung lifelessly, trailing over the floor. A trickle of blood ran steadily down his face from some wound under the hair; it ran vividly red upon a face white as death . . .

Umanski gave vent to a great groan. Rage and pity and love for the man whom he idolized were all bound up in that groan. It broke from the depths of his heart; it sounded through the room, stilled now in the cowing of the mob. And Mary Margaret heard it.

Kneeling there where she had knelt all along, her little thin hands clasped, her face upraised in passionate prayer, she knew what that groan of Umanski's meant. It meant that something terrible had happened to her hero. She had not turned her head; not once

had she taken her eyes, her mind, from the tense focussing of that fervent plea. If she could somehow hold God's attention—seize upon it, draw it toward her—if she could put fervor enough into that prayer to make Him hear, to make Him come to her Mr. Gilchrist and save him in time . . . No monk within his cell, no mystic in the pure moment of communion, ever threw more intensity into a supplication than did Mary Margaret in that black hour.

But now, as she heard that groan of Umanski's, her prayer broke. The sense of calamity struck terror to her soul—and with the terror came desperation. She knew only one impulse, and that was to fly to Mr. Gilchrist, to run, succor him where he had fallen. Her hand went out to a chair; slowly she raised herself by its aid; then, turning, she walked straight down the hall toward the mob.

A piercing scream from Miss Levinson stabbed the air.

"Mary Margaret! Where are your crutches?" she cried. She was white, her eyes started; it was as though she saw a supernatural form as she stared at the child.

Mary Margaret halted, startled by the cry. She looked down at her own legs in tearful bewilderment. "I don't know!" she cried.

She had not realized the fact that she was walking on her own feet, her crutches forgotten; but now, arrested by the other's amazement, she stood dazed and frightened. She tried the legs, gingerly; they moved, like actual legs——

"I kin walk! I kin walk!" Her shout rose through the room, it summoned everyone there to behold.

"Mr. Gilchrist! Mr. Gilchrist!" Mary Margaret cried. She had forgotten all else now, save that the miracle had happened at last. "Look——"

But at that moment, as the crowd parted, Mary Margaret for the first time saw her hero where he lay—senseless, limp, bleeding. "Oh, Mr. Gilchrist!" she cried, and now all jubilation suddenly died from her little thin voice; it went soft, deep, tender, agonized—it was maternal in its love and suffering. She made her way to him, bent over him, knelt, and drew his senseless form to her breast. "Oh, Mr. Gilchrist!" Mary Margaret sobbed.

But Umanski, the man of steel muscle and poet's soul, the man who, having much of the fighter, had also something of the mystic within him, saw more than a bleeding, fallen hero and a little one-time lame girl kneeling and supporting him. He stared at the two for a moment, in silence; then in a tone of hushed awe, he spoke:

"You wanted a sign!" he cried to the mob. "LOOK!"

His great arm outflung itself toward them imperiously. "Down on your knees—you murderers! God's in this room!" thundered Umanski. "Down—down on your knees!"

And the frightened mob obeyed him. One after another—blustering Jimmie, Tony, the great dockman, all—knelt there, in awed stillness. Joe Hennig, as someone noticed now, was lying back in a corner where

he had been kicked and tossed in the *mèlée*—a senseless heap; but his cohorts crossed themselves.

They had seen God!

CHAPTER XXIV.

Failure or Success.

In his own study, Daniel Gilchrist sat dreaming in a big armchair. It was Christmas eve, and it wore the cheery look that every room should wear at that time—the look of a room in which beats a human heart. It was upstairs in the shabby old dwelling where his club met; but, inexpensive though the furnishings were, there was an atmosphere of comfort, home, and charm. It was such a place as might be had anywhere for seven dollars a week, and its contents duplicated for a couple of hundred; yet no one could have peeped into it without envying the occupant. A fire glowed in the old-fashioned fireplace; books, writing things, and a gayly shaded lamp were on the table. "Christ in the Temple" hung, simply framed, above the grate. A cheap grass rug, odds and ends of second-hand furniture were offset by the quiet good taste of the old-gold grass-cloth on the walls, the brown over-curtains framing the cream net against the sash. This was pulled aside now, showing chimney-pots and roof-tops against a blue night sky, in which blazed a single star.

It was just after eight o'clock, and Daniel sat with a pipe in his mouth, facing the fire as he dreamed. He was thoroughly comfortable; his last injuries had healed, and he was his old fit self again. The lamp was not yet lighted, and, except for the glow of the embers, the room was in darkness. His arm hung

over the chair-arm; in his hand dangled a magazine, but he had not been reading. The dreaming minutes passed . . . Faintly, from far uptown, sounded the soft chime of the quarter-past . . .

A tap sounded faintly at the door, and, without waiting for a response, Mary Margaret entered. She walked briskly and without her crutches. She halted at the door, peered about—Daniel was lost in the darkness, and she believed herself alone. A package was clasped tightly in her hand, and she entered with the air of one on secret and very important business.

She crossed quickly to the table—turned on first one, then the other of the reading lamp's two lights. On the instant the room was illuminated, and she saw, to her dismay, the figure in the chair. In a desperate flurry she drew her package close, hiding it with hurried movements beneath her apron.

"Mr. Gilchrist, that you?" she asked, peering through the dazzle of the sudden light. "Goodness, how you scared me! I thought you went out!"

"No," he said, smiling at the child affectionately. "I just slipped up here to read awhile before we put our gifts on the tree. . . . Where's Grubby?"

Mary Margaret drew herself to a superb height, expressive of contempt beyond words. "Grubby!" she cried scornfully.

"He promised to help with the packages."

"Grubby's all swelled up with his new taxicab!" scoffed Mary Margaret. "Christmas Eve's the big night in the business, but he says don't worry—he'll

be here in time for the sandwiches . . . Am I interruptin' your readin'?" she asked with sudden anxiety.

"Oh, no! What have you there?" he said kindly.

The large protuberance beneath Mary Margaret's apron had caught his eye. She flushed, and nervously strove to hide it, but in vain.

"Why, where?" she asked with assumed innocence, gazing around the room.

"Under your apron!" Daniel laughed.

"Oh!" Her innocence was magnificent. In the utmost surprise she glanced toward the telltale apron. It stuck out in huge sharp corners that could not be hidden.

"I was gonna surprise you," she confessed. "It's your Christmas present!"

As always, her Christmas present to her hero was the greatest interest of the season to Mary Margaret. From the day when she had brought him that tiny, grubby bag of candy in his study at the Church of the Nativity, she had always plotted and planned with weeks of forethought for this dear gift. And now she brought forth from its ostrich-like concealment something very large and square and mystifying.

"From you—to *me?*" demanded Daniel, mustering a tremendous surprise.

"Yes. It ain't much . . . *you* know . . . an' I didn't want it on the tree . . . before everybody. I wanted to give it to you myself. Open it now."

Pretending breathless suspense, and with a delight that was truly genuine, Daniel opened the parcel. It

contained a framed picture, a cheap and highly-colored chromo of a rejoicing infant who had mistaken the tip of a dog's tail for the business end of a nursing bottle.

" 'Mama's Treasure'." he read the title impressively. "Oh, Mary Margaret!" he cried, rising and taking the child's hands in his own. "Mary Margaret!"

"You like it?" she cried, searching his eyes.

"Do I like it? It's just what I wanted!" There was honesty in Daniel's words; such love as this little girl's, he knew, was one of the priceless treasures of life, and, whatever the artistic atrocity of "Mama's Treasure," the thought that had prompted the gift was precious beyond measure.

"It *is?*—Honest?" She was glowing now with delight. "Let's put it in place of that one over the mantel-piece!" she cried. "That's an awful pretty pitcher, but mine's got colors in it!"

Daniel glanced at the treasured engraving of "Christ in the Temple," and hesitated. That was one of his rocks to lean on. His tact was ever to the fore, and now he said, kindly and wisely:

"Why not in place of Venus who fell on her nose?" pointing to a space upon the bookcase.

"Oh, yes!" Mary Margaret was fully satisfied. She placed "Mama's Treasure" with elaborate care. "It looks good, don't it?"

"Beautiful!" Daniel responded warmly. "I can't thank you enough." He took the child's hand. "I can't, really!" he said with impulsive sincerity.

Mary Margaret looked at him as he uttered the incredible words. "*You*—can't thank *me!*" she said. "*You*—that's give me——" Suddenly her voice broke with feeling. She looked down at her little thin legs, up again at her hero. Her eyes swam in tears. "Oh, Mr. Gilchrist!" was all she could say.

"Now! Now! Now!" he rebuked her tenderly. "We mustn't cry on Christmas!"

"B-b-but what—are you g-g-goin' to do if you're happy?" blubbered Mary Margaret.

"Try laughing!" he advised gayly, and, with a merry little chuckle, she obeyed. "Anyway," he went on, "if I'm having my Christmas now, you must have yours. Suppose you rummage on the sofa."

"Oh! Oh!" she cried, and ran like a little terrier to nose and prowl in the heap of piled-up pillows. "This?" she inquired, holding up a parcel in excitement.

"No—that's a book for Miss Levinson."

The pile of pillows was full of mysterious humps. Mary Margaret ferreted out another, and read its address. "'Mrs. Henchley.' An' here's another one ain't marked."

"Gloves for Mack," Gilchrist told her. "I wanted to show I appreciated his bringing back that coat."

She read from two more. "'Peter.' An' this one's 'Paul'."

"For your brothers."

She nosed still deeper. Suddenly the largest parcel of all came to light——

"Oh! 'For Mary Margaret'!" she read with an excited cry.

Daniel, strolling about the room with his pipe, smiled down upon her like a comfortable, be-slippered fairy godfather. "Open it now!" he commanded, standing back with delight, puffing while he watched.

Breathless, she tried the knot—hesitated—drew near him, looking up as though to make sure that this wonderful mystery were really for her. He nodded; she bent over the parcel, untying, unwrapping now with swift fingers—the paper was off—the box lay open—something soft as a kitten, white as a puppy, little and warm and cuddly——

"Oh!" was all that Mary Margaret could say. Her eyes outshone the star in the sky.

It was a child's fur set—the softest, cuddly-est of all the furs in the world! Muff and neckpiece! With lingering, thrilled fingers she drew them forth, tried them on——

"Oh, Mr. Gilchrist, you oughtn't!" she managed to say at last; but her eyes did not endorse her words. She looked about for a mirror, ran to it, gazed rapturously at herself, tweaking the neckpiece, holding up the little soft muff to her cheek.

"Oh! They're so beautiful!" she breathed. "They're the most beautifulest furs I ever seen! I've wanted a set like this always! You've made me so happy! I never was so happy before in my life!" Whereupon she burst once more into tears!

"Now!" scolded Daniel, smiling and shaking a stern finger.

"I know!" She checked the downpour and fell to laughing. "I mustn't. But I don't know how to thank you."

"Don't try."

"I never expected no such Christmas!" She started for the door. "I gotta show Mother!"

Her happiness was, indeed, beyond words. This simple bit of fur, of small cost, had made over the world for Mary Margaret—for love went with it. To Clare Goodkind a fabulously costly scarf of sable had failed to bring even a throb of joy, for with it love had not been.

"Take down a few of the packages as you're going," Daniel said, but the little girl was too obsessed with her excitement just then to do more than give vent to it. "I'll be back in a minute!" she called to him, and started to fly to her mother, when, opening the door in her rush, she revealed a visitor just arriving. "Oh!" gasped Mary Margaret, falling back in alarm. All her delight was crushed by a sudden, overpowering terror. "Mr.—Mr. Gilchrist!" she panted, turning back to her friend as though to warn him. For the mere sight of the visitor had revived all her fears for his precious safety. The man at the door was George Goodkind.

Daniel had turned at her cry; he gave a start of surprise, then recovered himself and came forward promptly.

"Well! Mr. Goodkind!" he exclaimed in a voice that was entirely at ease. Not a sign did Gilchrist show

that he recognized this man as an enemy, as one who had threatened him with the direst undoing. He was unalarmed, poised, even cordial.

Goodkind stood hesitating at the threshold. Strangely, the old authority was missing. He did not take possession of the room in his usual way. He did not even enter. He seemed doubtful as to his reception, and almost solicitously he inquired:

"May I come in?"

Daniel smiled. "Of course!" he cried, and drew up a comfortable chair toward the fire. "Sit down!"

"I've only a moment," Goodkind responded, himself. "Jerry's waiting for me in the car."

"How *is* Jerry?" Daniel inquired with friendly interest, taking a chair for a chat; while Mary Margaret busied herself with setting the room a bit to rights, as an excuse to keep a watchful eye out for her hero's safety.

At Gilchrist's question, the elder Goodkind shook his head despairingly. He glanced at the little girl as she moved easily about the room, unaided by the crutches of old days.

"I wish you could perform a miracle on *him!*" the father sighed.

"I wish I could!" Daniel returned sincerely.

Goodkind turned to the child. "You seem to walk all right."

"Oh, yes!" she replied happily.

His keen eyes studied her a moment; then he turned with narrowed scrutiny to Daniel. "Had a doctor look her over?" he demanded.

"Three of 'em," Daniel returned with a smile.

"Any opinion?"

"Three opinions." Daniel smiled more broadly now and fell into amused reverie.

Mary Margaret entered the discussion, having strong opinions upon *this* subject. If anyone should know the cause of her cure, who should it be, indeed, but Mary Margaret?

"They said *he* didn't do it, and you seen him!" she declared.

Daniel held up a warning finger to her. "Shh!" He turned to Goodkind. "They all say she suffered from hysterical paraplegia." The puzzled frown with which this was received prompted him to translate. "That's hysterical paralysis. One says she was cured by shock —you know; the riot. Another says it was suggestion . . . . believing . . . . which is another way of saying faith, isn't it? The important thing is that she's cured!"

But Mary Margaret had no use for the diagnosis of mere surgeons. "God did it," she declared with firmness. "God and Mr. Gilchrist!"

"Shh!" Daniel endeavored again to quell her ardor. "Take down an armful of those packages—like a good girl!" he urged. Even Mary Margaret could at times be almost naughty.

"I will!" she promised, repentant; and she gathered a load from the sofa, and started. But she had not altogether lost her fear of the visitor; he had once threatened her hero, and, although he appeared so mild a

present, who knew what might lie concealed behind his lamb-like exterior?

"You call—if you need me!" she whispered to Daniel as she departed.

Gilchrist looked at Goodkind questioningly now, as if wondering what his errand might be. The older man hesitated; he seemed at a loss to begin the conversation. Embarrassed, he took cigars from his pocket—his familiar refuge in moments of doubt.

"Smoke?"

"Thanks," said Daniel, but shook his head. "I'll stick to my old friend." He tapped his favorite pipe.

Another pause. Then, as if feeling his way, Goodkind opened. "How are things with you?"

"Fine!" Daniel returned heartily, his face filling with enthusiasm.

"Happy?" asked Goodkind.

Daniel was radiant. "Yes!" His eyes fixed themselves upon the face of his visitor. It was a far from happy face. "And you?" he asked, sympathy entering his voice.

"No," Goodkind replied deliberately. "Everything's—all wrong." His voice sank despondently. "My boy's very ill," he said. "Clare's wonderful to him," he added, and continued:

"I can't explain it—but she's like a different woman. And *she* seems happy. But Jerry's had to give up work and there's more trouble in Black River, and ——"

Goodkind halted; it wasn't easy to say what he had come to say. His words seemed to choke him; but he

set his lips, and, with a sort of explosion, he burst out:

"That's what's brought me!"

Daniel looked at him serenely. At length he asked, "You don't want *my* advice?"

"I want *you!*" Goodkind blurted out. At last he had broken the ice. It hadn't been easy to admit it, even to himself; it had cost him many days of inward debate, many inward rages, before he could eat his humble pie and come meekly to this man—the man he had called "Fool"—for help. But he had done it at last. And, now that the pie was eaten, he was ready to plead.

"I want you as general manager," he plunged on. "These strikes are such utter damn waste! We had a working compromise on your agreement and everything was all right, but we began figuring we could make more money . . . . and the men walked out, and flooded the mines! I——I" he hesitated. "I'd like you to take charge, Daniel!"

But Gilchrist shook his head. "I can't," he said with quiet firmness.

"Name your own salary!" To Goodkind, there could be but one reason why a man should hesitate at such an offer; and he was prepared to do away with *that.*

But still that quiet firmness. "My work is here," Gilchrist said.

"You can have anything you want!"

"I don't want anything."

"You want to see the men get their rights!" Ah, Goodkind congratulated himself, this was a skillful move; *now* he would reach the vulnerable heel!

But, "They'll get 'em," Daniel smiled. "Nothing can stop that."

Goodkind stared at the other. He had been driven, of late, to believe that the boy had a good head, after all; but now he was once more dubious. Was he, indeed, as Jerry always insisted, *"a nut"?*

"You're not going to turn down fifty thousand dollars a year?" he burst out, and flung open his palm with a gesture that seemed to make the fifty thousand tangible and present.

But Daniel turned away from the graphic gesture. "What can I buy with it that I haven't got?" he asked.

"Wh—what can you buy—with *fifty*——" the other began, gasping with incredulity.

"What have *you* bought?" demanded Gilchrist.

"I've got one of the finest houses in New York!"

"Is it any more comfortable than this?" Daniel's gesture covered the plain, yet charming room; the open fire, the glowing lamp, the books, the easy chair . . . .

"This one little room!" sneered Goodkind.

"How many rooms do you live in at the same time?"

To *that*, the other scorned to reply. "I've got half a dozen cars!" he continued, enumerating his treasures.

"I've two legs, and I walk, and keep well!" retorted Gilchrist with a whimsical smile.

"I've twenty servants——"

"Don't tell me you enjoy *that!*"

"And the respect of people about me——"

Daniel interrupted. "So have I!" he cried, and not without a flash of defiance.

Goodkind ignored the defiance. "And," he went on, "what's most important of all, I'm a success!"

Daniel had risen, to stroll thoughtfully; and now he halted, standing over Goodkind. He looked down searchingly into the older man's face.

"Are you?" he demanded at length.

Goodkind started at the tone, and looked up with a sharp frown. "Huh?" he said.

Daniel repeated it impressively. *"Are you?"* What is success? Money? Yes; that's what our civilization tells us. Money! But where has that brought us? Only to the elevation of the unfit . . . . the merely shrewd and predatory. All around us we see men of wealth who have nothing else . . . . neither health nor happiness nor love nor respect. Men who can get no joy out of books, or pictures, or music, or even themselves. Tired, worried men who are afraid to quit because they have no resource except to make money—money with which to buy vulgar excitement for their own debased souls. Why, Mr. Goodkind, I have an income that you wouldn't suggest to your bookkeeper, but I have peace, and health, and friends, and time to read, and think, and dream, and help. Which of us is the rich man?"

As Daniel's words went on Goodkind's head had sunk against his breast. Not that he was ready to accept the preachment in any spirit of humility—or to accept it at all, for that matter. But Daniel's picture had called to mind his own failure at the game of happiness—his lack of self-gratification. He had everything, as he had tried to make himself believe; and

yet he was far from satisfied. He was not a happy man. Gloom and doubt were gathering like a dark mist about him.

"But if everybody lived your way," he said warily, as Daniel paused, "what would become of the world's work?"

"Living that way is my contribution to the world's work. Another man's might be selling shoes, or writing plays, or digging ditches. Doing his job doesn't prevent any man from doing his bit. 'From every man according to his ability, to every man according to his needs'," Gilchrist quoted. "And," he added, "every man who gives his best must find his happiness."

"I'm afraid there wouldn't be much progress—living your way."

"That's the second time you've spoken of my way. It isn't *my* way. It's the sum total of all that has been learned and taught. You, and Jerry, and the others, have called me eccentric, and a fool, because I'm trying to walk a path trod hard by countless feet. Was Christ eccentric? Was Confucius a fool? And how about Buddha and Mohammed? What of St. Bernard, and St. Teresa, and St. Francis of Assisi—of Plato, and Zeno, and Lincoln, and Emerson, and Florence Nightingale, and Father Damien, and Octavia Hill, and all the saints and scientists, and poets and philosophers, who have lived and died in complete forgetfulness of self? Were they fools, or were they wise men and women who had found the way to peace and happi-

ness? Were they failures, or were they the great successes of all Time and all Eternity?"

Goodkind, sitting despondent, his head sunk upon his breast, did not hear the door open. He did not see the sick and stumbling man who entered. He only heard Daniel's words: words of fire, scorching, searing words, uttered in that clear, strong young voice of conviction—the words of a practical man who knew and had experienced life, words clearly thought out; but uttered in a voice which seemed at moments almost that of a seer.

George Goodkind did not know that his son Jerry had entered the room and stood before him. With head bowed, he answered to Daniel Gilchrist's question:

"God knows!"

CHAPTER XXV.

The Star.

Jerry Goodkind was a dying man. No-one could have looked at that hollow chest, that emaciated figure, that gauntly ghost-like face, without recognizing the fact. He stumbled at every step, dragging his legs with difficulty; an ugly cough broke forth with every sentence that he uttered. His speech was thick. But, despite all this, he was still Jerry; still the old cynicism, the old defiance, showed in face and gesture. Still the swagger persisted, pitiful in its powerlessness. He was cruel, insolent, arrogant . . . .

"Well, you've been the devil of a time!" he cried, angrily addressing his father. "I came up to see what was keeping you!"

Goodkind had looked up with a start at the sound of his son's voice, and now he rose heavily. "Mr. Gilchrist——" he began, with a motion toward Dan.

Jerry, with one of his old, sneering smiles, pretended to see Dan now for the first time. "Oh, hello, Gilchrist!" he observed nonchalantly.

"How are you, Jerry?" the other returned cordially, stepping forward to greet the new guest.

"Not so damned well. But I'll be all right in the Spring. Clare's looking after me!" Jerry returned with pride. "Clare's a good sport!" he affirmed.

"What I need now's a run down to Palm Beach." His eyes roved inquisitively around the plain room. "So you're reduced to this, are you?" he asked with satisfaction.

"Yes," replied Daniel without hesitation.

"Going to take my job?" Jerry demanded. He knew his father's object in making this visit, and a good deal of secret resentment and jealousy probably lurked under his don't-care manner.

"No," Daniel told him.

Jerry's eyebrows rose in surprise. "Why not?"

"Your father understands."

"Yes . . . . So do I!" returned young Goodkind with sudden glee. In that cadaverous face, his grin was ghastly. "Didn't I always say you were a nut?" he cried. "That's it! A nut!" He gave way to a burst of delighted, malevolent laughter; but the laughter was too much for him. It turned into a racking cough that tore its way forth.

His father hurried to him. "Come, Jerry!" he said, and put an arm about him to support his convulsed body.

Before Goodkind could get his son to the door, there was a light rap, and Mary Margaret entered. She glanced keenly at Goodkind; plainly, Mary Margaret did not intend to trust this villain long alone with her hero!

Jerry, with his father's hand upon his arm to steer him, was about to depart, but Mary Margaret caught his attention. He eyed her in his old, insulting way; then turned to Dan.

"Who's the girl?" he demanded.

"Your father's waiting," Gilchrist responded, his eye sternly, coldly, meeting the other's.

"A' right!" responded the visitor, but still he paused at the door. He reeled with weakness; but the old Jerry was uppermost. His ugliest leer flashed back at Dan as he departed.

"Some failure *you've* made out of life!" he crowed. Again the leer—at Mary Margaret, now . . . .

"Wheels!" he cried. "By God, wheels!" And with another ghoulish laugh which broke again into that dreadful cough, he jerked away stubbornly from his father's hold and went alone down the stairs.

Goodkind started to follow, then halted. An impulse seemed to be fighting within him for release. Suddenly he crossed the room, to Dan; seized "the boy's hand——

"I wonder if *you're* the failure after all!" he said, looking hard into Daniel's eyes. He wheeled abruptly, surprised at himself. George Goodkind had almost showed deep feeling!

"Goodnight!" he said bruskly, and hurried away.

Daniel fumbled for his pipe, found it in a pocket. He put it in his mouth. Some chimes, in the distance, were beginning to peal. What was that they were chiming? The old, old music—

> Hark, the herald angels sing,
> Glory to the new born King,
> Peace on earth and mercy mild,
> God and sinners reconciled.

Daniel walked to the window, drew the curtains still wider apart, threw open the sash to let in the tingling air and the tingling notes of the chimes. Mary Margaret, who had never relinquished her furs during all this time, drew the scarf close about her with a squirm of delight, revelling in the cold air that gave her an excuse to do so. She approached him where he stood, looking forth into the Christmas-laden night.

One arm was akimbo as he stood, and she crept up close. She wriggled her head through the crook of the arm and nestled to him. He laughed gently, looking down upon her little dark head . . . . The chimney pots . . . . the blue night sky . . . . one bright, gloriously bright star . . . .

"Mr. Gilchrist!" breathed Mary Margaret in awe, as she gazed upon it. "Is that the Star of Bethlehem?"

"I wonder!" queried Daniel.

And the pealing chimes made answer.

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